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ABSTRACT

General education students show a higher rate of attendance than do special education students. To shed light on this discrepancy, the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) of the New York City Board of Education conducted a three-part study focusing on students in both groups who are truants or in danger of truancy. Part 1 of the study was a national mail survey of attendance policy and procedures in 34 cities. Part 2 is a statistical summary of attendance data for special education and general education students in New York City public schools. Part 3 is the report of a field study in five community school districts (five elementary schools and two middle schools in each district and two high schools in each borough). For the most part, initial attendance intervention was quicker and more consistent for special education than for general education students, but once referred, the frequency of follow-up services was comparable. Districts and schools showed a wide range of variability in services, resources, and types of staff, both nationally and in New York. In general, the OREA found that special education students receive as good, or slightly better, attendance intervention as do general education students. Recommendations are made for reduction of absenteeism. Study findings are presented in 49 tables and 7 figures. Eight appendixes contain additional information about the conduct of the three-part study, including case studies for three schools. (SLD)

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ED 363 675

OREA Report

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ATTENDANCE AMONG GENERAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA)

July, 1993

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ATTENDANCE AMONG GENERAL EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA)

July, 1993

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7/26/91

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COMPARATIVE ATTENDANCE STUDY--GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

General education students show a higher rate of attendance than do special education students. In order to shed light on this discrepancy, OREA conducted a three-part study focusing on students in both groups who are truanting or are at risk of becoming truants. Part I is a National Survey of attendance policy and procedures in 34 cities. Part II is a statistical summary of attendance data for special education and general education students in New York City public schools. Part III is a report of a field study in public schools, community school district offices, and high school superintendencies. This field study was conducted during a year in which the New York City public schools experienced severe financial constraints due to the slashing of nearly $500 million dollars from the school system's annual budget. A decrease in services to students, including attendance teachers in community school districts, was apparent to OREA researchers.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS*

The National Survey

Literature Review

A review of the existing literature on attendance policies and procedures for special education students listed in the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center of the National Institute of Education) and the FOCUS (the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University) databases revealed that most attendance-related literature was devoted to drop-out prevention programs. Some sources dealt with statistical overviews relevant to a particular school system with little or no interpretation. Markedly few studies were concerned with the special education population.

Survey Responses

Questionnaires were sent to all State Departments of Education within the continental United States, as well as to 95 affiliates of the Council of Great City Schools. Due to the

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*Appendix a contains a memorandum written by the Executive Director of the New York City Public Schools Division of Student Support Services (D.S.S.S.) in response to this report's findings. The Bureau of Attendance is part of the D.S.S.S. and is the administrative office responsible for implementing attendance policies and procedures.

general lack of response to the state survey, the bulk of the analysis refers to the responses from the city/district level.

Relevant findings include:

- Most of the 34 responding school districts use automated systems to record attendance and only five districts (15.2 percent) use manual procedures (usually the roll book).

- Forty-six percent of the responding districts initiate follow-up within the first two days that a student with multiple or chronic absences is not present at school, and 38.5 percent at the third or fourth day.

- In most cases, the person responsible for initial attendance follow-up is school-based.

- Counseling is the most frequently provided service offered to students with multiple/chronic absences. The second largest group of services offered is the modification of the student's program.

- The overwhelming majority of districts report no differences in procedures and services for special education students who are frequently absent, as compared to those for general education students with similar attendance patterns.

- There are virtually no differences in procedures and services for special education students attending resource rooms, self-contained classes, or special schools.

- Absence rates for special education students as compared to general education students has rarely been studied outside of New York City. However, ten of the respondents (39 percent)--including New York City Public Schools--indicated higher absence rates for special education students than for general education students.

The Statistical Summary

Attendance data obtained from the Period Attendance Report revealed the following trends:

- Attendance rates for special education classes are lower than for general education classes at the elementary, middle, and high school level.

- The difference between the two groups increases between

elementary and middle school. For elementary schools, the average difference in attendance rates is 4.7 percentage points; in middle schools it is 9.8 percentage points; and in high schools it is 10.7 percentage points.

- Attendance rates vary by school and district. As a rule, where general education attendance rates are high, so are special education attendance rates. However, with a very few exceptions, the special education rates continue to be the lower of the two.

The Field Study

OREA conducted research activities in five community school districts with long-term experience in the A.T.S. (Automate the Schools) system, and in each of the five high school borough superintendencies. OREA staff chose five elementary schools and two middle schools in each district, and two high schools in each borough superintendency. These schools were chosen in order to develop a sample ranging from high levels of absence to low levels of absence. Therefore, varying levels of involvement with the 407 absence investigation process were expected. The Form 407 is a document which is generated after a specified number of days of absence in a variety of circumstances--most commonly, after ten days of unexplained absence. The 407 investigation is under the domain of the attendance teacher, and forms only one aspect of the total absence follow-up process.

OREA research revolved around four activities:

1. Interviewing district-level personnel

- Superintendent or designee - for an overview of attendance policy and the district's attendance needs.
- District Attendance Coordinator - for details of attendance procedures in the district.
- District Administrator of Special Education (DASE) - regarding the implementation of attendance policy for special education students.
- Bilingual Coordinator - for input regarding the attendance needs of LEP students.

OREA followed a similar strategy for high schools. However, Bilingual Coordinators had little to contribute with regard to attendance issues at the C.S.D. level, so the comparable person was not interviewed at the high school superintendencies. Otherwise, OREA researchers interviewed the following administrative staff in each of the five borough

superintendencies: the Superintendent (n=4), the District Supervising Attendance Officer (n=5), and the Executive Assistant for Special Education (n=5). It quickly became apparent that the high schools are far better staffed and organized for dealing with attendance issues, than are the C.S.D.s.

2. School-level Interviews

Within each study school, OREA researchers conducted interviews with the following personnel: the principal or a designee, the attendance coordinator, the person charged with carrying out the investigation of absences, two special education and two general education teachers, a parent, and one or two students. In the elementary and middle schools, the person with responsibility for following up on absenteeism varied greatly, as did the degree of coordination with the district attendance teacher working out of the district office. Each high school had a full or part-time attendance teacher on site.

3. Review of Form 407s

The Form 407 is a document which is generated when a student has been absent without excuse for several days, usually ten consecutive, as well as under other specified circumstances (see Appendix I). OREA researchers attempted to obtain a representative sample of these forms from each study school. The researcher assigned to each elementary and middle school chose every special education case and every third general education case for review. In the high schools, the researcher chose every third special education, and every ninth general education case for review. After obtaining the sample, the researcher coded information from the 407 onto a data retrieval form. The forms were probably not reflective of the total level of attendance service offered to students.

4. Review of Attendance Plans

When entering a school or district, the OREA researcher requested the attendance plan for either 1990-91 or 1991-92. This activity yielded the poorest results.

Findings

For the most part, initial attendance intervention was quicker and more consistent for special education than for general education students. Once referred, the frequency of follow-up services for general and special education students was comparable. In addition:

- In general, it was found that the lower the attendance

rate, the higher the number of 407s that were filed. Thus, in most cases, since special education students showed lower attendance rates than general education students, there was a higher rate of 407 filings for the special education population.

- Districts and schools showed a wide range of variability in services, resources, and types of staff devoted to attendance improvement. The most consistency was found in the high schools, due to the fact that the attendance teacher is school and not district-based.

- Students in the state-funded Attendance Improvement/ Dropout Prevention Program had more resources and services for attendance than non-program schools.

- Special education classroom teachers tended to be more actively involved in attendance improvement efforts for their students than general education classroom teachers.

Students in both groups are absent for similar reasons; however, there are certain areas in which teachers and other respondents felt that special education students may be more vulnerable than their general education counterparts. These are:

- Multiple referrals to health, guidance, and social welfare agencies during the school day. This includes appointments for evaluations, as well as treatment.

- Administrative issues, especially paperwork delays during transfer.

- Greater distance from school, which is often exacerbated by difficulties with bussing patterns.

- Poorer coping mechanisms for family difficulties.

- Illnesses associated with lower-incidence handicaps, such as Down's syndrome.

CONCLUSION

In general, OREA found that special education students receive as good, or slightly better, attendance intervention than do general education students. However, this still leaves a great deal of room for improvement for both populations. We would therefore recommend the following:

- Every effort should be made during this time of fiscal constraints to increase attendance staffing on the

community school district level.

- Educate school and district staff as to the appropriateness of targeting resources to populations with special needs, even while integrating them into the life of the school.

- Encourage more rational record-keeping to decrease duplication of paperwork, while making the Form 407 more useable, keeping in mind that the 407 is only one part of the attendance investigation process.

- Increase staff development programs which integrate attendance issues with other matters in order to hold the audience's interest.

- Utilize parent involvement programs where stronger parents can act as leaders and role models for those who are having difficulty meeting their responsibilities in seeing to it that their youngsters are attending school.

- Continue to develop innovative models of instruction which will hold students until they complete their education.

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CHAPTER I

NATIONAL SURVEY

Attendance Policies, Procedures, and Services

INTRODUCTION

Background to Study

During the late 1970s a group of advocates for special education students and their families were successful in their class action suit against the New York City Public Schools. It was determined that the New York City Public Schools did not process special education student referrals within legal bounds and also did not provide appropriate educational placements for these students. Therefore, the school system was instructed to rectify these conditions. Presently, during the 1991-92 school year, in order to determine the adequacy of the school system's efforts in this regard, the lawyers representing the plaintiffs in this suit have requested that the school system conduct a study of its attendance policies and procedures as they relate to special education students. Chancellor Fernandez has assigned this study to the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment.

Study Components

There are three components to this study:

Component 1: Research on National Trends: this component focuses on an investigation of existing attendance policies and procedures for special education students.

Component 2: Demographic Analysis of General and Special Education Attendance: this component provides a statistical report of system-wide school-level attendance

data for the New York City Public Schools.

Component 3: 407-Eligible Study: this component is a field study of the policies and procedures for investigating unexcused absences in a representative sample of districts and schools of the New York City Public School system.

This chapter details the findings for component number one. The findings of the demographic analysis are presented in the Chapter II. The 407-eligible study is reported in Chapter III. Chapter IV discusses conclusions and recommendations from the three components of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the existing literature on attendance policies and procedures for special education students listed in the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center of the National Institute of Education) and the FOCUS (the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University) databases revealed the following limitations and weaknesses which make these studies insufficient sources of information for our purposes:

- The bulk of studies that devote attention to the issue of attendance/absenteeism among special education students consist of evaluations of individual programs which operate, or are intended to operate, under very specific circumstances (e.g., districts with a high concentration of LEP [Limited English Proficiency] students), or address a particular segment of the special education population (e.g., specific grade levels or handicapping conditions).

- Many studies that deal with attendance among special education students do so with just a secondary interest. Attendance is treated as only one factor contributing to the subject of primary concern (e.g., dropping-out, illiteracy, etc.).

- Other sources of information are given in entirely statistical reports (typically District Reports) which, by themselves, do not enable any interpretation of the data.

Therefore, the remainder of this report will focus on our survey research findings.

METHOD

Sample

Questionnaires, each accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, were sent to all State Departments of Education within the continental United States as well as to 95 affiliates of the Council of Great City Schools. The response rate for the state survey was 30 percent (n=15), and 35 percent (n=34) for the survey at the city/district level. No geographic concentration nor any other relevant characteristics of those responding could be observed. (Lists of the respondents to both surveys are provided in Appendix A.)

Data Collection and Data Sources

The surveys consisted of questionnaires with six items on the state level instrument and seven items on the district level instrument. In order to facilitate a maximum of information, especially new and unanticipated information, all questions were open-ended and only later, when certain similarities and patterns emerged, were categories established. (Copies of the questionnaires can be found in Appendix B.)

Typically, the questions were answered by the research staff of the respective Special Education divisions. Answers also came from general research/assessment units, especially when

quantitative data were provided. In several cases information had to be obtained from policies/guidelines that were sent to us by the respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The issues of attendance in general, and attendance among special education students, in particular, are hardly addressed at the state administrative level. This is illustrated by the response to item three of the state survey where 40 percent (n=6) stated that they leave the decision regarding when and how to institute attendance follow-up entirely to the individual district. As far as the research efforts are concerned, it might be sufficient to refer to item 6a of the state survey for clarification. Eighty-three percent (n=10) of those responding to this question acknowledged that they have never done any comparisons between general and special education students' rates of attendance/absence. The two respondents that did do some comparisons only were able to convey general impressions rather than detailed quantitative data. Because of this lack of information at the state level the following discussion will focus on the findings of the city/district study. (The results of the state survey are given in Appendix C.)

Items one to five of the city/district survey refer to attendance procedures and services as they apply to general, as well as, special education students. Items 6a to 7c reflect differences between these two groups. The results are discussed by item below.

1. Manner in which the district tracks attendance.

Most of the districts (84.8 percent, n=28) responding to this item use automated systems to record attendance and only five districts (15.2 percent) use manual procedures (usually the roll book). Results are illustrated in Figure I-1. Fifteen of the thirty-two New York City school districts and all high schools use automated systems.

2. Number of days of absence per semester after which follow-up is initiated.

The response to this item clearly indicates the high degree of awareness devoted to the issue of attendance follow-up. Forty- six percent (n=12) of the districts answering this question initiate follow-up within the first two days that a student with multiple or chronic absences is not present at school and 38.5 percent (n=10) at the third or fourth day (see Figure I-2). In the New York City Public Schools follow-up is to be initiated on the second day of absence.*

3a. Title of the person charged with the follow-up of students with multiple or chronic absences.

The most noticeable characteristic that the response to this item reflects is the tremendous variety of positions that people who are responsible for follow-up of absent students hold: School Truant Officer, Attendance Officer, Attendance Counselor, Administrative Supervisor for Attendance and Discipline, Director of Attendance, Visiting Teacher, Truant Officer etc. are among those titles that were named. The most common titles cited

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* The data provided in this report for the New York City Public Schools come from the 1990-1991 School Attendance Manual and initial OREA 1991-1992 Jose P Study data collection.

were Principal, Assistant Principal, Teacher, and Attendance Teacher. The frequency distribution of these titles are illustrated in Figure I-3a. In the New York City Public Schools the Attendance Teacher is typically charged with follow-up.

3b. Administrative (organizational) level of the follow-up.

In most cases (44 percent of those responding to the item) the person responsible for follow-up is school-based. Combinations of administrative levels also exist when several persons are involved in the follow-up (see Figure I-3b). Attendance Teachers in New York City are district-based and may have district-wide or school-based responsibilities.

4. Procedures that are used in the follow-up of students with multiple or chronic absences.

The responses to this item indicate a great deal of similarity in the procedures that are used. Not surprisingly, the frequency of the measures named decline with their severity. Sixty-eight percent (n=21) of the districts responding to this item indicated that they make telephone calls in an effort to return a student back to school, whereas just 35.5 percent (n=11) said that they refer the student to law enforcement. This decline can be explained by the fact that the less severe measures like telephone calls and letters are often sufficient to make parents aware of the situation and to return the student back to school. It should further be mentioned that although several respondents just indicated home visits, student/parent conferences, referral to attendance investigator, etc., it can be assumed that they

first make telephone calls and send letters to the home of the absent student. It is most likely that these procedures were not named because they were taken for granted. Numbers are illustrated in Figure I-4. New York City Public Schools use all procedures listed.

5. Services offered to students with multiple/chronic absences.

Counseling--not surprisingly--is the most frequently (66.7 percent of those responding to this item) named service that is provided to the students. The second largest group of services offered is the modification of the student's program, a category which includes the answer "placement in alternative programs" (given in 6 of the indicated 13 responses). As far as referrals to community services (33.3 percent), it is not possible to give a further specification on what exactly was meant by this, except that in four cases the school's assistance in obtaining clothing for the student was emphasized. All services that are illustrated in Figure I-5 are provided to students in the New York City Public Schools.

6a. Differences in procedures and services for special vs. general education students.

All districts which sent back the questionnaire (n=34) also responded to this particular question. However, this does not necessarily suggest a high degree of attention devoted to the issue--the overwhelming majority of districts report no differences in procedures and services for special education students that are frequently absent, as compared to those for general education students with similar attendance patterns. The

only differences that were reported include: faster procedures/services, the amount of time devoted, the type of staff involved with each student group, and special programs and services provided to special education students. (None of these programs/services was more closely specified.) This is consistent with our findings for the New York City public schools which participated in Part 3 of this study.

6b. Differences in attendance procedures and services between the various groups of special education students.

The data show that there are virtually no differences made in procedures and services for special education students attending resource rooms, self-contained classes, or special schools. This is also the case for the New York City Public Schools.

7. Absence rates for special education students as compared to general education students.

The most frequent answer given to this item (46.2 percent of responses) is that the subject has not been studied and that there is thus no data available. However, in three cases (11.5 percent) it was indicated that there are no differences in absence rates for the two student groups. Thirty-nine percent (n=10) of the respondents (including New York City Public Schools) indicated higher absence rates for special education students than for general education students (see Figure I-6). Six of the districts that indicated higher special education absence rates ascribed them to particular physical handicaps and/or more frequent illnesses. Two districts said that higher

absence rates were due to mental/cognitive or emotional/social conditions. (These results are illustrated in Figure I-6.) Although only six districts provided a breakdown by school-level information, their data suggest that absence rates for special education students are only higher in secondary school.

In the next chapter, we will present data from New York City's 32 community school districts (C.S.D.s) and six high school superintendencies on the statistical differences between special and general education attendance rates. Chapter 3 will then examine attendance practice within five of those C.S.D.s, and in the high schools.

Table I-1

Manner in Which Districts Track Attendance

	n	% of respondents[a]	% of responses to the item[a] (n=33)
Automated system	28	82.4	84.8
Manual recording	5	14.7	15.2
No response	1	2.9	

[a]This table reports percentages in two ways: First, the percentages are calculated from the number of all questionnaires that were sent back to OREA (n=34) and second, the percentages are calculated from the number of those actually responding to this item.

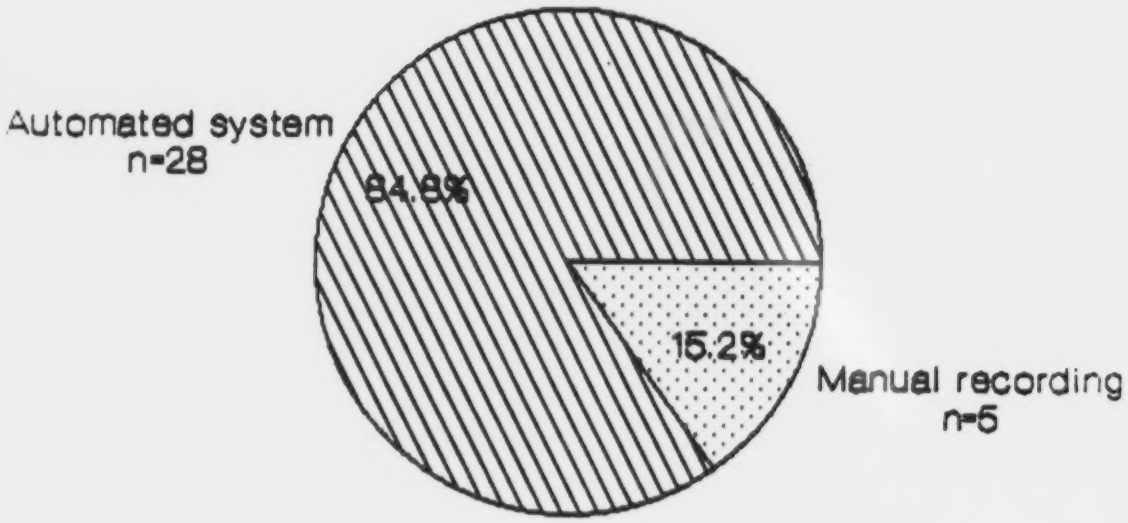
Table I-2

Number of Days After Which Attendance Follow-up is Initiated

	n	% of respondents[a]	% of responses to the item[a] (n=26)
After 1-2 days	12	35.3	46.2
After 3-4 days	10	29.4	38.5
After 5-6 days	3	8.8	11.5
After 7 or more days	1	2.9	3.8
No response	9	26.5	

[a]This table reports percentages in two ways: First, the percentages are calculated from the number of all questionnaires that were sent back to OREA (n=34) and second, the percentages are calculated from the number of those actually responding to this item.

Figure I-1
Manner in Which Attendance is Recorded in School Districts Surveyed (n=33)



Source: Self-report by respondents to OREA National Attendance Survey (January 1982)

Table I-3a

Position Titles of Persons Providing Attendance Follow-up

	n[a]	% of respon-dents[b]	% of responses to the item[b] (n=32)
Principal	10	29.4	31.3
Assistant Principal	3	8.8	9.4
Teacher	3	8.8	9.4
Attendance Teacher	3	8.8	9.4
Other	21	61.8	65.6
No response	2	5.9	

[a]Respondents to this item had the option of providing multiple responses, and therefore the number of responses are greater than the total number of questionnaires submitted.

[b]This table reports percentages in two ways: First, the percentages are calculated from the number of all questionnaires that were sent back to OREA (n=34) and second, the percentages are calculated from the number of those actually responding to this item.

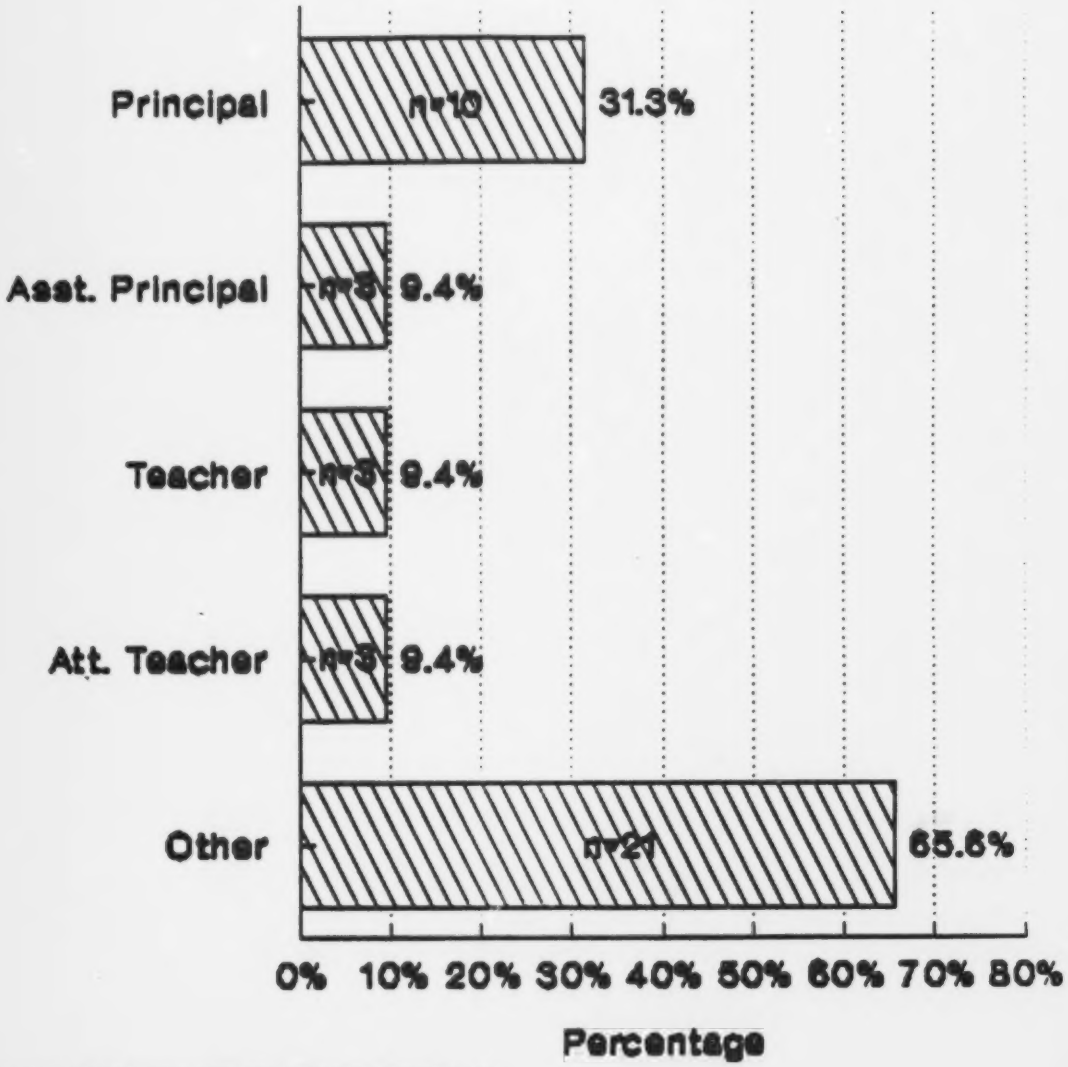
Table I-3b

Administrative Level of Persons Providing Attendance Follow-up

	n	% of respon-dents[a]	% of responses to the item[a] (n=25)
Class-based	0	0	0
School-based	11	32.4	44.0
District-based	9	26.5	36.0
Combination	5	14.7	20.0
No response	9	26.5	

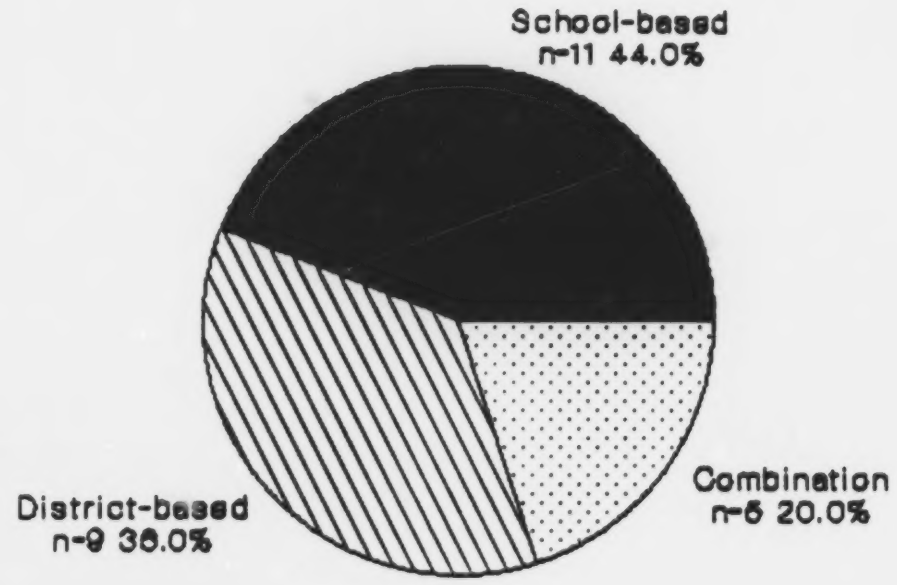
[a]This table reports percentages in two ways: (1) the percentages are calculated from the number of all questionnaires that were sent back to OREA; (2) the percentages are calculated from the number of those actually responding to this item.

Figure I-3a
Title of Person Charged With Follow-up in School Districts Surveyed (n=32)



Source: Self-report by respondents to OREA National Attendance Survey (1/92); reflects multiple (n=40) responses.

Figure I-3b
Administrative Level of Attendance Follow-up in School Districts Surveyed (n=25)



Source: Self-report by respondents to OREA National Attendance Survey (January 1992)

Table I-4

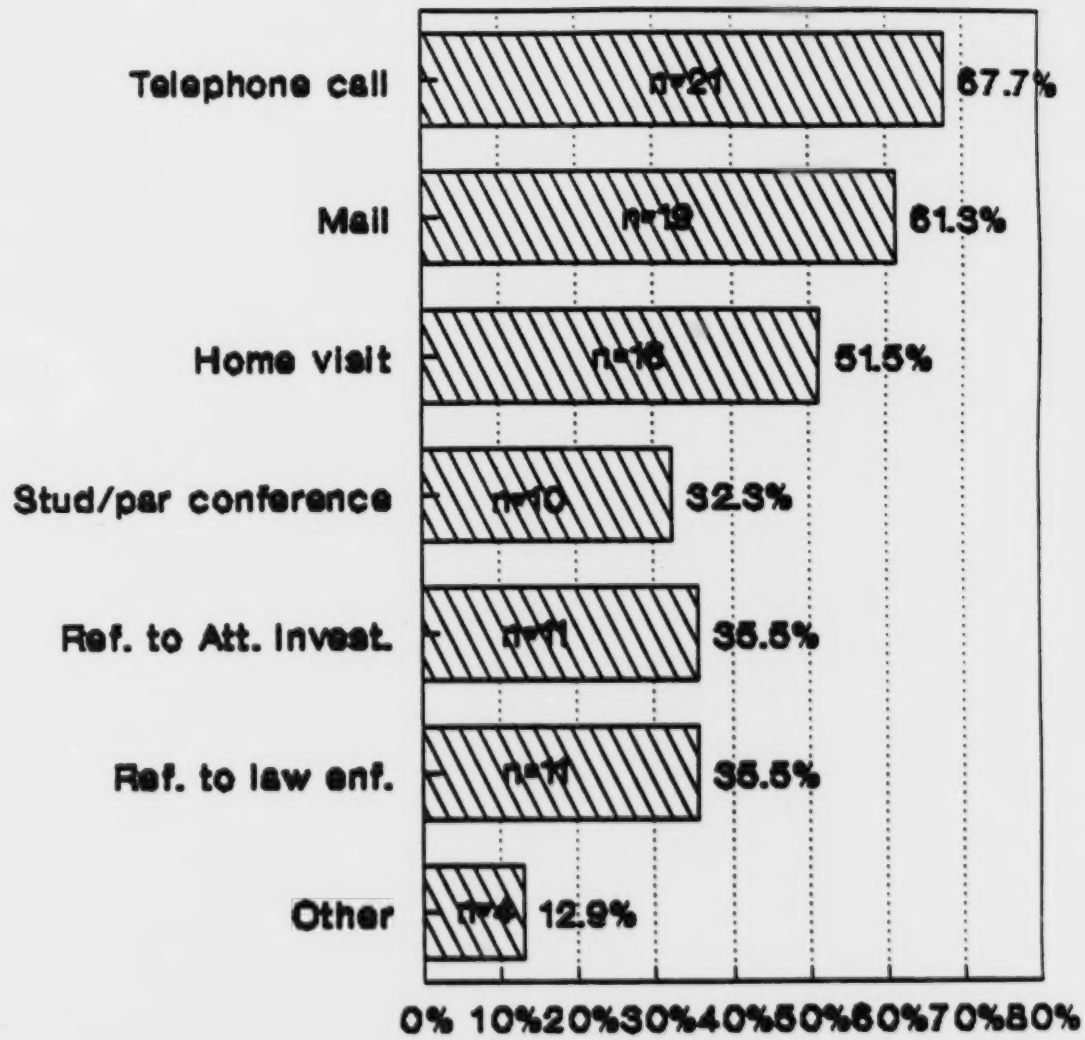
Attendance Follow-up Procedures

	n[a]	% of respon-dents[b]	% of responses to the item[b] (n=31)
Telephone call	21	61.8	67.7
Mail	19	55.9	61.3
Home visit	16	47.1	51.6
Stud/parents conference	10	29.4	32.3
Ref. to Attend. Investigator	11	32.4	35.5
Ref. to law enforcement	11	32.4	35.5
Other	4	11.8	12.9
No response	4	11.8	

[a]Respondents to this item had the option of providing multiple responses, and therefore the number of responses are greater than the total number of questionnaires submitted.

[b]This table reports percentages in two ways: First, the percentages are calculated from the number of all questionnaires that were sent back to OREA (n=34) and second, the percentages are calculated from the number of those actually responding to this item.

Figure I-4: Procedures Used in The Follow-up of Frequently Absent Students in School Districts Surveyed (n=31)



Source: Self-report by respondents to ORBA National Attendance Survey (1/92); reflects multiple (n=92) responses.

Table I-5

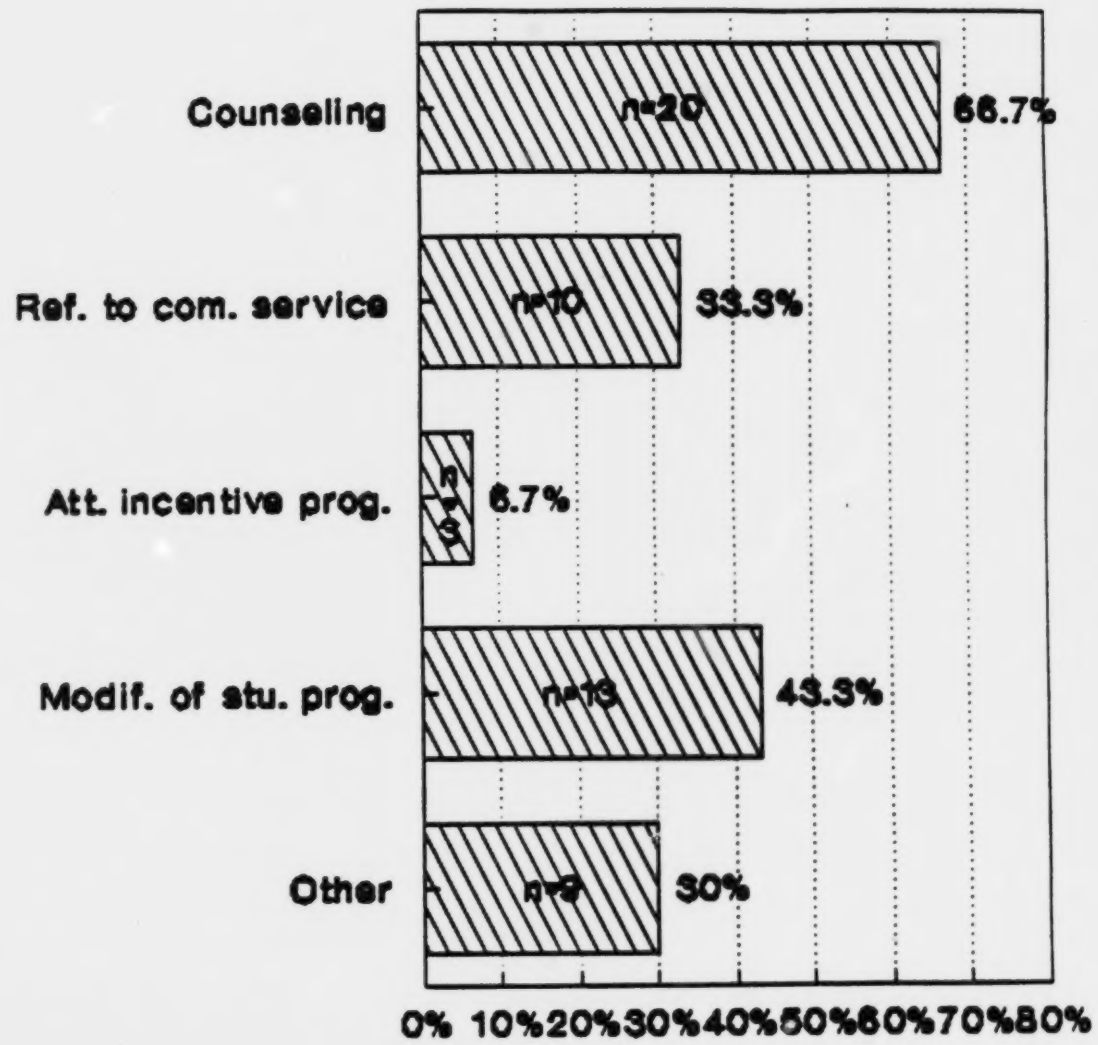
Services Provided to Multiple/Chronic Absentees

	n[a]	% of respon-dents[b]	% of responses to the item[b] (n=30)
Counseling	20	58.8	66.7
Ref. to community services	10	29.4	33.3
Attend. incentive program	2	5.9	6.7
Modification of stud. prog.	13	38.2	43.3
Other	9	26.5	30
No response	4	11.8	

[a]Respondents to this item had the option of providing multiple responses, and therefore the number of responses are greater than the total number of questionnaires submitted.

[b]This table reports percentages in two ways: First, the percentages are calculated from the number of all questionnaires that were sent back to OREA (n=34) and second, the percentages are calculated from the number of those actually responding to this item.

Figure I-5: Services Offered to Students with Multiple/Chronic Absences in School Districts Surveyed (n=30)



Source: Self-report by respondents to OREA National Attendance Survey (1/92); reflects multiple (n=64) responses.

Table I-6a

Differences in Procedures and Services for Special vs. General Education Students

	Elem. School	Middle School	High School
No differences	27 (79.4%)	26 (76.5%)	25 (73.5%)
Faster procedures/services	3 (8.8%)	3 (8.8%)	3 (8.8%)
Other	4 (11.8%)	5 (14.7%)	6 (17.6%)

Table I-6b

Procedure and Service
Differences Among Types of Special Education Students[a]

	n	% of respondents[b]	% of responses to the item[b] (n=28)
No differences	27	79.4	96.4
Differences	1	2.9	3.6
No response	6	17.6	

[a]The types of special education students include those attending resource rooms, self-contained classes and/or special schools.

[b]This table reports percentages in two ways: First, the percentages are calculated from the number of all questionnaires that were sent back to OREA (n=34) and second, the percentages are calculated from the number of those actually responding to this item.

Table I-7a

Differences in Absence Rates for Special vs. General Education Students

	n	% of respon-dents[a]	% of responses to the item[a] (n=26)
No differences	3	8.8	11.5
Higher absence rates for spec. ed. students	10	29.4	38.5
Higher absence rates for gen. ed. students	1	2.9	3.8
Not studied	12	35.3	46.2
No response	8	23.5	

[a]This table reports percentages in two ways: First, the percentages are calculated from the number of all questionnaires that were sent back to OREA (n=34) and second, the percentages are calculated from the number of those actually responding to this item.

Table I-7b

Reasons for Higher Absence Rates Among Special Education Students

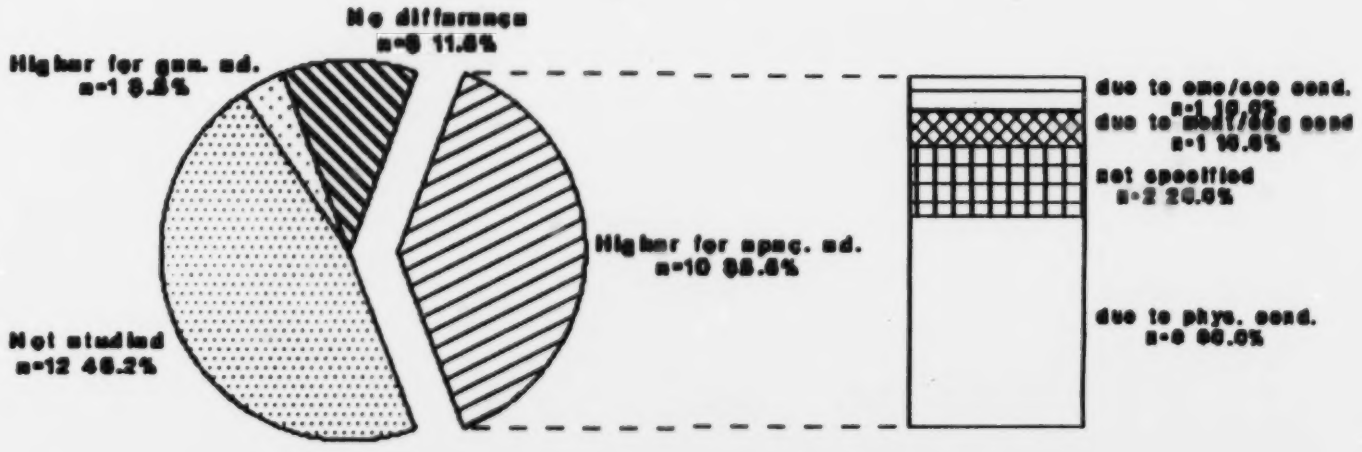
	n
Higher due to physical condition	6
Higher due to mental/cognitive condition	1
Higher due to emotional/social condition	1
No response	2

Table I-7c

Higher Absence Rates by School Level for Special Ed Students

	n
Higher for spec. ed. students in elem. school	0
Higher for spec. ed. students in second. school	6
No response	4

Figure I-6
Absence Rates in School Districts Surveyed (n=26)



Special vs. general education students

Reasons given for higher absence rates among spec. ed. students

Source: Self-report by respondents to OREA National Attendance Survey (January 1992)

CHAPTER II

THE STATISTICAL STUDY

OREA conducted a study comparing the attendance rates for students in general education classes with those for students in self-contained special education classes. The purpose of this study was to determine if there were any differences between the attendance of general education and special education students. Further, the study examined whether there were any differential effects of school-level data on attendance rates and student performance.

Methods and Data Sources

Using centrally-maintained data files, OREA conducted a series of analyses, examining attendance rates and school characteristic and student outcome data for each school in the New York City Public School System. School characteristic and student outcome data were obtained from the 1990 school profiles. Attendance data were obtained from the Period Attendance Report (PAR Report), which provides monthly data on the average daily attendance of students in each grade in each school. Using the PAR Report, OREA was able to determine the attendance rates for students in general education and special education classes in each school and community school district.

Results

Attendance Rates

Table II-1 shows the quartile distribution of average daily attendance of special education and general education students, by school level. For special and general education students within each school level, the table shows the average daily attendance of the schools with the poorest attendance (i.e., 25th percentile), average attendance (50th percentile), and highest attendance (75th percentile). Thus, for elementary schools at the 25th percentile of the elementary school attendance distribution, the average daily attendance for special education classes was 82.3 percent compared to 87.6 percent for general education classes. As the results in Table II-1 indicate, the attendance rates for special education classes are lower than the rates for general education classes across all three school levels and at all three percentile points in the distribution. Moreover, the disparity between special and general education attendance increases from one school level to the next such that by middle school, the schools with the highest special education attendance (81.5 percent) are still lower than the schools with the worst general education attendance (83.8 percent).

Table II-2 shows the average daily attendance for general education and special education classes, by community school district. Citywide in the elementary schools, the attendance rate of general education students was 4.7 percentage points

Table II-1
Percentage Attendance of General and Special Education Students, by School Level

	Elementary School		Middle School		High School	
Percentile	Special Educ.	General Educ.	Special Educ.	General Educ.	Special Educ.	General Educ.
75	88.4	92.0	81.5	89.5	76.2	87.2
50	85.5	90.4	76.6	86.4	71.9	82.4
25	82.3	87.6	71.7	83.8	65.8	77.0

Table II-2
Percentage Attendance, by Community School District,
for Elementary and Middle Schools

District	Elementary Schools			Middle Schools		
	Special Education	General Education	Difference	Special Education	General Education	Difference
1	84.1	87.1	3.0	71.0	82.3	11.3
2	84.2	90.5	6.3	76.8	88.2	11.4
3	84.6	88.1	3.5	74.4	84.7	10.3
4	81.3	86.9	5.6	73.5	82.9	9.4
5	79.7	85.1	5.4	70.6	78.0	7.4
6	85.9	90.2	4.3	76.5	88.1	11.5
7	84.1	87.4	3.3	79.2	87.2	8.0
8	83.5	88.2	4.7	76.4	83.6	7.1
9	82.9	86.2	3.3	75.6	82.7	7.1
10	81.1	87.8	6.7	71.7	83.9	12.3
11	89.2	92.0	2.8	80.8	87.9	7.1
12	82.9	86.7	3.8	70.5	80.6	10.1
13	83.4	89.3	5.9	75.0	86.1	11.1
14	83.1	89.1	6.0	73.3	86.5	13.2
15	85.0	90.8	5.8	72.5	85.9	13.4
16	79.5	86.1	6.6	68.6	79.1	10.5
17	83.6	90.6	7.0	72.0	85.3	13.3
18	90.8	92.6	1.8	84.2	91.9	7.7
19	84.5	88.8	4.3	75.5	84.0	8.4
20	86.9	90.7	3.8	77.0	88.2	11.1
21	82.6	89.6	7.0	70.0	86.4	16.4
22	87.4	91.6	4.2	78.0	89.5	11.6
23	80.5	85.9	5.4	70.2	81.1	10.9
24	88.9	92.1	3.2	79.6	89.8	10.2
25	88.5	93.5	5.0	82.3	91.0	8.7
26	91.3	94.4	3.1	88.8	93.6	4.8
27	85.0	90.6	5.6	77.0	85.9	8.9
28	87.1	90.8	3.7	70.8	83.4	12.6
29	88.7	92.0	3.3	83.8	88.3	4.5
30	86.4	90.7	4.3	78.9	87.9	9.0
31	89.2	91.9	2.7	84.0	90.3	6.3
32	83.7	89.1	5.4	69.6	84.8	15.2
TOTAL	85.1	89.8	4.7	76.5	86.3	9.8

higher than that for special education students, with a range of differences from 1.8 percentage points to 7.0 percentage points. In every district, general education attendance was higher than special education attendance. In middle schools the citywide difference was 9.8 percentage points, with a range of 4.8 percentage points to 16.4 percentage points. Once again, every district showed higher general education than special education attendance.

Table II-3 compares the quartile attendance distribution, by district, for general education and special education classes for the elementary schools. The results show that, within districts, there is a strong concordance between the attendance in special education and general education classes. In districts where general education attendance is high, special education attendance is high. This finding is demonstrated by the large number of cases in which general education and special education attendance are observed within the same quartile. For the elementary schools, a total of 21 of the 32 districts were observed as being in the same quartile of the attendance distribution for both general education and special education. Similar findings were observed for the district quartile distribution of attendance for middle schools. (See Table II-4.) For the middle schools, 21 of the 32 school districts were found to have their general education and special education attendance in the same quartile.

Table II-3
Comparison of District Attendance Quartile Distributions for Special Education and General Education for Elementary Schools

Special Education	General Education				
	Quartile 1	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4	Total
Quartile 1	4	1	0	0	5
Quartile 2	4	7	4	0	15
Quartile 3	0	1	4	0	5
Quartile 4	0	0	1	6	7
Total	8	9	9	6	32

Table II-4
Comparison of District Attendance Quartile Distributions for Special Education and General Education for Middle Schools

Special Education	General Education				Total
	Quartile 1	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4	
Quartile 1	6	3	0	0	9
Quartile 2	3	5	2	0	10
Quartile 3	0	1	6	1	8
Quartile 4	0	0	1	4	5
Total	9	9	9	5	32

The mean (average) percentage of attendance in high schools, by superintendency, for special education and general education classes is found in Table II-5. As the results indicate, the difference between special education and general education attendance is 10.7 percentage points, with a range of 9.5 to 18.0 percentage points. As was observed for the community school districts, when general education attendance was high special education attendance was correspondingly high.

This observation is further supported by the results in Table II-6, which shows the rank order and differences in rank order among the six superintendencies. (As high schools are organized into only six superintendencies, the small number of cases make quartile distributions an inappropriate analysis; hence the use of rank order statistics.) As the results in Table II-6 indicate, with the exception of one superintendency, the rank order of attendance for special education classes is virtually the same as the rank order for general education classes. These findings are consistent with those observed for the community school districts.

Tables II-7, II-8, and II-9 summarize the quartile distributions of general education and special education attendance rates, by school, for elementary, middle, and high schools, respectively. Table II-7 indicates that 194 or the 451 elementary schools with special education classes showed special education attendance in the same quartile as general education attendance.

Table II-5
Mean Percentage of Attendance for Special Education and General Education Students by High School Superintendency

Superintendency	Mean Percentage of Attendance for: Special Education	General Education	Difference
Alternative	56.3	74.3	18.0
Manhattan	68.1	82.5	14.4
Bronx	68.7	78.2	9.5
Brooklyn	73.7	83.6	9.9
Queens	75.3	85.4	10.1
BASIS	69.4	81.2	11.8
Total	70.6	81.3	10.7

Table II-6
Rank Order of Special and General Education Attendance, by High School Superintendency

Superintendency	Special Education	General Education	Difference
Alternative	6	6	0
Manhattan	5	3	2
Bronx	4	5	1
Brooklyn	2	2	0
Queens	1	1	0
BASIS	3	4	1

Table II-7
Comparison of School Attendance Quartile Distributions for Special Education and General Education for Elementary Schools

Special Education	General Education				
	Quartile 1	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4	Total
Quartile 1	69	32	13	2	116
					25.7%
Quartile 2	42	31	25	14	112
					24.8
Quartile 3	14	34	34	26	108
					23.9
Quartile 4	4	20	31	60	115
					25.5
Total	129	117	103	102	451
	28.6	25.9	22.8	22.6	100.0

Table II-8
Comparison of School Attendance Quartile Distributions for Special Education and General Education for Middle Schools

Special Education	General Education				
	Quartile 1	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4	Total
Quartile 1	29	8	3	3	43
					24.9%
Quartile 2	13	19	9	2	43
					24.9
Quartile 3	3	11	21	8	43
					24.9
Quartile 4	1	2	12	29	44
					25.4
Total	46	40	45	42	173
	26.6	23.1	26.0	24.3	100.0

Table II-9
Comparison of School Attendance Quartile Distributions for Special Education and General Education for High Schools

Special Education	General Education				
	Quartile 1	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4	Total
Quartile 1	18	5	1	0	24
					24.0%
Quartile 2	3	16	8	0	27
					27.0
Quartile 3	1	9	10	4	24
					24.0
Quartile 4	0	0	9	16	25
					25.0
Total	22	30	28	20	100
	22.0	30.0	28.0	20.0	100.0

Table II-8 shows similar results for middle schools. A total of 98 of the 173 middle schools had general education and special education attendance at the same quartile level.

Finally, the results for the high schools are very similar to those observed for both the elementary and middle schools. As Table II-9 shows, 60 of the 100 high schools had general education attendance in the same quartile as special education attendance.

Table II-10 summarizes the citywide attendance rates for all three levels, as well as for citywide special education programs. While there is a great amount of variability in the attendance rates, elementary schools, on the whole, have higher attendance rates, by program than do middle schools. Similarly, the middle school programs have higher attendance rates than the high schools. Citywide special education programs have attendance in the middle range.

Relationship to School-Level Information

Tables II-11, II-12, and II-13 show the correlation between special education and general education attendance rates and school-level variables that were determined to be of importance in overall school performance for elementary, middle, and high school, respectively. In each of the correlations calculated, while differences in magnitude were observed, the results for special and general education were in same direction (i.e., positive or negative).

Table II-10
Percentage Attendance in Special Education Programs, by School Level

School Level	Program	Percent Attendance
Elementary	MIS01	85.5
Elementary	MIS02	82.1
Elementary	MIS03	86.9
Elementary	MIS04	84.7
Elementary	MIS05	82.5
Elementary	Other Special Education Programs	84.0
Middle	MIS01	77.6
Middle	MIS02	65.5
Middle	MIS03	80.7
Middle	MIS04	87.4
Middle	MIS05	84.0
Middle	Other Special Education Programs	79.5
Middle	All SIE Programs	72.6
Citywide Programs	Other Special Education Programs	66.9
Citywide Programs	All SIE Programs	75.7
High Schools	MIS01	72.0
High Schools	MIS02	59.0
High Schools	Other Special Education Programs	60.3

Table II-11
Relationship Between Attendance
and Key School Variables for
Elementary Schools

Variables	Special Education	General Education	SE - GE
Mobility	-0.33	-0.63	-0.12
Temp. Housing	-0.10	-0.33	-0.14
% Utilization	0.16	0.18	-0.07
% Free Lunch	-0.40	-0.56	0.01
% LEP (SE)	-0.02	-0.07	-0.04
% LEP (GE)	-0.12	-0.14	0.02
Teacher Exp.	0.43	0.52	-0.07
% TPD	-0.45	-0.59	0.05
Teacher Absence	-0.19	-0.30	0.01
Reading Ach. (GE)	0.42	0.67	0.05
Reading Ach. (SE)	0.02	0.10	0.01
Total SE Register	-0.27	-0.21	-0.03
% LEP in Bil. (GE)	-0.25	-0.39	0.01
Math Ach. (SE)	0.18	0.08	-0.05
Math Ach. (GE)	0.48	0.71	0.03

Table II-12
Relationship Between Attendance
and Key School Variables for
Middle Schools

Variables	Special Education	General Education	SE - GE
Mobility	-0.48	-0.71	-0.01
Temporary Housing	-0.24	-0.38	-0.04
% Utilization	0.12	0.24	0.08
% Free Lunch	-0.35	-0.33	0.12
% LEP (SE)	-0.12	-0.13	0.05
% LEP (GE)	-0.15	-0.11	0.09
Teacher Experience	0.42	0.39	-0.21
% T.P.D.	-0.41	-0.43	0.15
Teacher Absence	-0.05	-0.16	-0.06
Reading Ach. (GE)	0.49	0.75	0.02
Reading Ach. (SE)	0.18	0.20	0.01
Total SE Register	-0.32	-0.31	0.12
% LEP in Bilingual(GE)	-0.26	-0.42	-0.04
Math Ach. (SE)	0.21	0.29	0.01
Math Ach. (GE)	0.52	0.78	0.00

Table II-13
Relationship Between Attendance
and Key School Variables for
High Schools

Variables	Special Education	General Education	SE - GE
Mobility	NA	NA	NA
Temporary Housing	-0.54	-0.30	0.31
% Utilization	0.19	0.34	0.22
% Free Lunch	-0.27	0.33	0.00
% LEP (SE)	-0.35	-0.24	0.22
% LEP (GE)	-0.19	0.03	0.18
Teacher Experience	0.39	0.36	0.01
% TPD	-0.33	-0.34	-0.10
Teacher Absence	-0.16	0.01	0.01
Reading Ach. (GE)	0.61	0.65	0.04
Reading Ach. (SE)	0.26	0.25	-0.09
Total SE Register	-0.23	-0.17	0.12

For example, in Table II-11, the correlation between mobility in elementary schools and special education attendance is -.33; the correlation between mobility in elementary schools and general education is -.63. These findings indicate that while the strength of the relationship may vary slightly, the direction of the relationship is the same for both populations (i.e., the higher the mobility within the school, the lower the attendance rate, for both special education and general education). This finding indicates that while there may be a relationship between a particular variable and attendance, the relationship is the same regardless of whether one is analyzing general education or special education attendance. Similar results were observed for the other variables in Table II-11, yielding interpretations similar to that cited above.

In addition, correlations were calculated between the school variables and the difference between the general education and special education attendance rates. As the results in Table II-11 show, the correlations were all very close to zero, indicating the absence of a relationship between the difference in attendance and a particular school variable.

Table II-12 presents the correlations between school variables and special education and general education attendance in the middle schools. These findings show the same results as those observed for the elementary schools (see above). Further, the correlations between the variables and the difference in

general education and special education attendance are all approximately zero, indicating no relationship.

Table II-13 presents the correlations between school variables and special education and general education attendance in the high schools. A number of variables used in the analyses for the elementary and middle schools are not included in the high school analysis because the variables are not applicable to the high school level (e.g., mathematics achievement for general education and special education). Overall, the results for high schools are very similar to those observed for the elementary and middle schools. However, the percent of students receiving free lunch deviates from the previously observed patterns, primarily because of the problems of collecting the free lunch forms in the high schools. Nevertheless, the correlation between the percent of students receiving free lunch and the difference in the attendance is zero, indicating no relationship.

Overall, these findings further indicate that while there is a difference between special education and general education attendance, the rates are not differentially affected by school-level variables such as student mobility, percent of LEP students, teacher absences, etc.

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Conclusions

The results of this study indicate the following:

- There are differences between the attendance rates of special education and general education students and these differences vary among schools and among districts. Overall, attendance rates for special education classes are lower than for general education classes at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

- The difference between the two groups increases between elementary and middle school and high school. In the elementary schools, citywide, the difference between general education and special education attendance is 4.7 percentage points; in high school, it is 10.7 percentage points. In the middle schools, the difference, citywide, is 9.8 percentage points. In all districts, at all levels, attendance is higher for general education than for special education.

- The attendance rates for general education and special education students vary together, indicating that schools with high general education attendance rates also have high special attendance rates.

  The differences in attendance rates for general education and special education students are not differentially affected by school-level variables. While these variables do influence student attendance there is no discernible difference in their effect.

CHAPTER III

THE FIELD STUDY

BACKGROUND

Chapter I compared attendance policy in various school districts throughout the United States, and the degree to which specific attention is paid to the special education population. New York City's policies and procedures compare favorably with other school districts in the nation, and New York makes a greater effort to track special needs students than do most other school districts. However, as shown in Chapter II, general education students have a higher rate of attendance than special education students. In order to shed light on this discrepancy, OREA was asked to conduct a field study focusing on students in both groups who are truanting or are at risk of becoming truants. The OREA researchers specifically looked for differences and similarities in the attendance investigation process across schools with varying levels of absenteeism. Research staff also conducted interviews designed to obtain information about overall attendance practice, in the hope of finding a number of schools or districts with practices which may be helpful to other schools or districts within the system.

The field work described herein was conducted during a year in which the New York City public schools experienced severe financial constraints due to the slashing of nearly $500 million dollars from the school system's annual budget. The resultant decrease in academic and support services was apparent to OREA

researchers as evidenced by the decrease in the number of attendance teachers in some of the study districts.

While the attendance follow-up procedure involves many stages, usually beginning with a phone call or post card home after a few days of unexplained absence, the Form 407 is a document recording an attendance investigation by the Attendance Teacher. In practice, the attendance investigation is usually requested by school-based personnel at the C.S.D.-level, while most high schools generate Form 407s by computer after a student has been absent a specified number of days (usually ten). It must be emphasized that 407s document only one portion of the attendance follow-up process. (See Appendix I for a summary of the circumstances under which a Form 407 is to be generated.)

The field portion of this study focuses on actual attendance practice under the circumstances just described above. Both confusion over regulations, and the lack of adequate attendance staffing for all students create difficulties in meeting these regulations in a timely fashion. However, it will be shown that some districts have devised creative solutions such as the deployment of paraprofessionals for meeting attendance needs. In addition, special education students appear to receive more attention to their absence patterns simply through the smaller ratio of staff to students, and greater consciousness of the multiple needs of the youngsters. This chapter consists of two sections: the first presents our study of attendance practice in the community school districts, while the second presents our

findings in the high schools.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Methodology

OREA conducted research activities in five districts with long-term experience in the A.T.S. (Automate the Schools) system. A.T.S. provided information on the proportion of students with ten or more absences for each school in those districts. We used this information to predict the need for 407 absence investigation in the schools themselves.* While the need to use districts which were experienced with A.T.S. constrained our sample, we were still able to obtain information from districts which represent the diversity of New York City's public schools.

Discrepancies exist between the attendance experience of general and special education students. In addition, schools with positive experience with one group does not always predict positive experience with the other. Furthermore, as this report will continue to demonstrate, trends are not consistent within districts. Therefore, it was imperative that we conduct a qualitative study to shed light on the relative practices in the schools and districts. In order to do this, OREA staff chose five elementary schools and two middle schools in each district where we expected there would be varying levels of need for 407 absence investigations (Table III-1). OREA also included schools with varying proportions of special education and LEP students in

*Because a 407 investigation is only generated for students with extensive unexplained absences, OREA could only predict the need for an investigation.

their populations.

OREA research revolved around four activities:

Interviewing district-level personnel

Interviews were conducted with the following personnel in each study district:

- Superintendent or designee - for an overview of attendance policy and the district's attendance needs.
- District Attendance Coordinator - for details of attendance procedures in the district.
- District Administrator of Special Education (DASE) - regarding the implementation of attendance policy for special education students.
- Bilingual Coordinator - for input regarding the attendance needs of LEP students.

Interviewing school-level personnel

Within each study school, OREA researchers conducted interviews with the following personnel: the principal or a designee, the attendance coordinator, the person charged with carrying out the investigation of absences, two special education and two general education teachers, and one or two parents and students.

An examination of 1990-1991 Form 407s

OREA researchers attempted to obtain a representative sample of Form 407s from each study school. The researcher assigned to each school asked to see the 1990-1991 consecutive register. From the register, the researcher chose every special education case and every third general education case for review. In the situations where no consecutive register could be obtained, the researcher went directly to the files of 407s and

chose every special education 407 and every third general education 407. After obtaining the sample, the researcher coded information from the 407 onto a data retrieval form.

Review of attendance plans

When entering a school or district, the OREA researcher requested the attendance plan for either 1990-91 or 1991-92. This activity yielded the poorest results.

Presentation of Findings

District-level interviews

Districts will herein be referred to as B, C, D, E, and F (these letters were chosen at random). OREA researchers interviewed one District Superintendent, two Deputy Superintendents, an Acting Superintendent, and one Director of Pupil Personnel Services. Table III-2 summarizes key responses by district. Four of the five districts have an attendance committee or a pupil personnel committee which deals with attendance issues. Three of the five districts conduct attendance-related staff development at the school or district level. The interviewee who provides the most staff development herself, feels that attendance is best integrated with other issues since it is usually considered to be too dull a topic for school personnel at large. The two districts which do not conduct attendance-related staff development have relatively high attendance rates and very low attendance staffing. In general, the superintendents or their representatives favor integration of services across student populations with some difference in the

thrust of investigation and services according to age or grade.

Overall, the district staff felt that they lacked adequate resources to address attendance, as well as other issues. Organization of the attendance services themselves is under the purview of the attendance coordinator and varied greatly by district. For instance, District C has only one attendance teacher, the attendance coordinator himself, while District D employs three full-time attendance teachers (in addition to the attendance coordinator) and a family assistant for each school. While it is true that the attendance rates for these districts differ by approximately 6 percent at the elementary school level and 7 percent at the middle school level, with District C having the higher rates of attendance, our study does show that those students who do need the services are less likely to receive them in any organized fashion in District C. District E assigns one of its two part-time attendance teachers to the special education population, while all the other districts integrate their resources. Table III-3 summarizes key findings for the interviews of community school district attendance coordinators.

Bilingual issues are addressed through the DASE, a special education professional. Interviews with the bilingual coordinator were not fruitful in the context of the overall study. The DASEs (District Administrator for Special Education) themselves were more preoccupied with the needs of the special education population as a whole, than with a particular subpopulation, although all attempted to meet the needs of LEP

students through the appropriate guidelines. It was considered preferable to meet a student's linguistic needs within the district and as close to home as possible, since travel could negatively affect a student's attendance. In fact, four of the five DASEs considered transportation to be a factor which affects the attendance of all special education students. This was supported in our school-level interviews.

Three of the five DASEs stated that they provide formal input into attendance policy or planning (see Table III-4 for a summary of DASEs attendance involvement). In Districts D and E where the DASEs do not have a formal attendance role, there is still some cross-fertilization between the two areas of concern. In District D, the DASE was a school attendance coordinator in the recent past, and in District E, the Director of Pupil Personnel Services has been an advocate for the special education population for many years. Thus, the districts' special education population continues to be represented at the district level.

The DASE's primary concern is the general quality of special education services. If this quality is high, attendance should be better than if it is not. District B mentioned a lack of well-trained teachers and clinical services for the MIS II population, pointing out that "attendance is abysmal" for this program service category. All five DASEs agreed that decreasing attendance might signal that a child requires a re-evaluation. Usually, though, a problem as serious as a child not being placed

appropriately will show up in more ways than attendance. As one respondent noted, requesting a re-evaluation because a student is not attending "doesn't really solve the problem" and other causes of non-attendance need to be investigated as well.

Interviewees often cited social issues which impinge upon the student's ability to attend school. One deputy superintendent (District D) pointed out that students prefer school to other environments. The attendance coordinator in that district places a lot of attention on reaching parents. This is supported by the DASE who finds that special education is "more on top of the [attendance] situation probably because of smaller numbers ... whoever is available and identifies the problem, begins home contact." The fact that special education is closer to the individual student was a general point of view; however, the manner in which this is actualized varied somewhat across districts, as well as within schools.

In sum, each of the five study districts exhibited very different styles of organization which were generally reflected in the other levels of research. All districts lacked sufficient attendance staff for both general and special education students.

However, District C, with only one attendance professional, displayed no evidence of a cohesive attendance program. This may be due to a perceived lack of need. For example, at the elementary level, District C meets the Chancellor's mandate of 90 percent attendance for both special education and general education students. Yet, there is a divergence in attendance

rates at the middle school level, where special education student attendance decreases more than six percentage points, barely meeting the middle school mandate of 85 percent attendance. At the same time, general education attendance decreases by less than one percentage point, remaining well above the Chancellor's mandate for middle schools.

The two districts with the lowest rates in the study were Districts B and D, with neither district reaching the Chancellor's mandate of 90 percent attendance for either general education or special education elementary school students. At the middle school level, special education attendance declines by 13 percent in District B, and nine percent in District D, while general education attendance decreases by nearly five percent in both of these districts. District D had, by far, the most cohesive program of the entire study through its reliance on paraprofessionals. The district also demonstrated a general attendance consciousness as evidenced by the large board which displays attendance rates for each school as one walks into the district office. However, as the case studies in Appendix F and Appendix G show, the disjuncture between elementary schools and middle schools is a very difficult problem.

School-level Interviews

Attendance-consciousness is partially reflected in the building principal's knowledge of and concern with attendance issues. A large number of study schools were headed by new or acting principals as a result of this year's early retirement

program; i.e., eleven, or 31 percent of our sample, had less than one year of experience in this position. Thus, principals were not an especially good source of information concerning practice in the 1990-91 school year. With regard to present policy and procedures, most were concerned with daily routines. While ten of the 35 respondents said that their school does target a special population for intervention, only one mentioned special education. The other populations were those which had past attendance problems or were considered to be at risk of such behavior. In two cases, additional services were targeted to students in temporary housing. Six schools are presently A.I.D.P. schools, while nine had been in the past five years. Although principals and other staff expressed dismay at losing A.I.D.P. programs once attendance rates increase, only one principal reported an actual decrease in attendance after A.I.D.P. ended.

Only one principal said that "there is no need to" ever become personally involved with a 407 investigation. The others stated that they would become involved when hearing of a problem from others, in cases of excessive or patterned absence, when there is a history of truancy, or to add "muscle" in the case of a non-compliant parent. Among the problems which principals see special education students struggling with are: bussing; greater family, health, socio-emotional and behavior problems; lack of motivation; and the learning and cognitive deficits which probably originally necessitated the special education placement.

However, a small minority of principals stated that bussing helps special education students attend school, as does the specialized attention which they receive once there (they "like to be in school").

In theory, the attendance coordinator is the person to whom the principal delegates supervision of attendance issues. The role and function of the attendance coordinator varied both across and within districts. In some schools, administration exhibited confusion over the role of the attendance coordinator -- a pedagogue with clear administrative and liaison duties (as mandated) vs. a school aide. Other schools exhibited creative solutions to freeing up time for a pedagogue to address attendance issues. One middle school in District B assigns a gym teacher to this function (see Case Study, Appendix G). District D assigns the special education site supervisor to the position of school-wide attendance coordinator in some of its schools.

Usually, the attendance coordinator is a guidance counselor or assistant principal who spends several hours per week on attendance issues, delegating the bulk of clerical work to school or attendance aides. On the other hand, seven schools did not have a pedagogue in place as the school attendance coordinator, but assigned this task to a school aide or secretary. Otherwise, the role of the paraprofessional is generally limited to handling postcards, or screening attendance print-outs. In general, the school aide or pupil accounting secretary makes phone calls or sends post cards within two to five days of absence.

In practice, OREA researchers discovered that overlap exists in the roles of attendance coordinator, attendance paraprofessional, and the district level attendance teacher. One division in the way practice is actually carried out is between schools which rely solely on district-level staff for attendance investigations and those which begin this process with school-level personnel. District E is the only district in the OREA sample that assigns an attendance teacher (part-time) to the special education population. Table III-5 summarizes the responses of district attendance teachers who were interviewed as the attendance field investigators for their schools.

An elementary school, B-4, illustrates some of the problems which occur when there is inadequate staffing for dealing with attendance issues, even where interviewees voiced commitment and concern in this area. Here the school aide functions as the attendance coordinator, while the district attendance teacher spends about one day on site. The attendance teacher reports a good informal rapport with guidance and the principal, but considers her caseload to be overwhelming: "You can't give me 1,300 kids and ten other schools and [other duties]. Attendance should have a higher priority."

Another District B study school utilizes the services of a school neighborhood worker who is affiliated with the A.I.D.P. program. However, only District D, has an active paraprofessional presence committed to the attendance program under the supervision of the district attendance office. OREA

therefore found that personnel involved with the attendance investigation process on the school level hold a variety of titles: family assistant or associate, school neighborhood worker, attendance aide or school aide, guidance counselor, A.I.D.P. workers, or specialized personnel such as a health coordinator, or the special education crisis intervention teacher. OREA researchers interviewed 22 such persons finding that their responsibilities are as diverse as their backgrounds. Ten of the respondents do carry out some portion of the attendance investigation (including home visits--but not necessarily on a regular basis) while 12 were limited to clerical tasks. With anywhere from less than one year's experience to more than 30 years, the school-based attendance investigator may spend from less than five hours (n=6) to more than 35 hours (n=3) on attendance-related issues. An additional concern voiced by interviewees across categories was safety, but only one family assistant stated that she had actually decreased her schedule of home visits because of street violence.

Table III-6 summarizes responses concerning the amount of time which elapses before the attendance investigation is initiated under a variety of circumstances. While about three-quarters of respondents stated that 407 investigations for unexplained absences begin by the tenth day, another 15 percent of the respondents stated that the 407 investigation is not begun until the 15th day or later. This discrepancy can be partially explained by the use of paraprofessionals in some districts who

attempt to bring the family into the school for a conference with guidance staff. A 407 referral is not made until the school staff are able to determine if the family has responded to the school-level interventions. (See page 21 for a further discussion of the Chancellor's Regulations concerning the Form 407.)

Although attendance rates, as shown in Chapter II, clearly demonstrate that special education students have poorer attendance than general education students, the consensus among interviewees was that these students receive more services than other youngsters.* Within the school building, the special education program is under the purview of the special education site supervisor. Therefore, it was hoped that OREA interviews with site supervisors and homeroom teachers would shed light on this contradiction between attention and outcome.

OREA researchers interviewed 26 special education site supervisors. The discrepancy between the number of study schools and the number of respondents in this category is explained by the fact that site supervisors are generally responsible for more than one school. According to the respondents, special education is often represented on committees which deal with attendance issues (n=16), but their input may be limited to general advisement. Just as school-level interviewees rarely mention special practices for groups of students, there is little

*This includes both services mandated as a part of the I.E.P. (Individual Educational Plan), and earlier absence intervention prior to 407 investigation.

variation within the special education population. Exceptions include one respondent who states that additional attention is paid to the LEP students, and two who state that policy varies somewhat by program/service category (including additional service for the MIS II population).

Furthermore, special education site supervisors overwhelmingly feel that attendance services for special education students should be integrated with general education students. Of the two respondents who favor specialized services, one mentioned the overall size of the site, and the other expressed concern for the needs of low-incidence populations within special education, such as the MIS V student. The 22 supervisors who favor integrating services feel that it would improve self-esteem, and prepare students for the mainstream. In addition, some said the system works well as it is, that the two populations are really similar, that parents and students prefer this system, and that specialization would lead to neglect.

Special education site supervisors appear to be actively involved with both general and special education school staff. This can be crucial for attendance service delivery. As the special education attendance teacher in District E shared, he is able to do his job more effectively in the study school where he has good rapport with the special education site supervisor. Table III-7 summarizes key responses concerning special education involvement in the absence investigation. In general, special education concerns parallel those for the mainstream. The

presence of additional staff sometimes increases the likelihood of faster intervention, but not necessarily an actual 407 investigation. In fact, it may be preferable to handle situations on the school level as much as possible. Once such a referral is made, the timeliness of intervention appears to be similar in the two populations.

OREA researchers interviewed 131 teachers: 67 general education and 61 special education homeroom teachers, with three teachers who have a combination of duties including resource room instruction. Data from the interviews with the 128 homeroom teachers show that they varied greatly in their knowledge of attendance issues and policies. Representation on attendance committees was very rare. Generally speaking, teachers considered their duties to include monitoring daily attendance and notifying "the office" of any problem. Many teachers feel that they have lost some control over attendance monitoring with the institution of A.T.S., and some continue to use roll books in addition to the A.T.S. bubble sheets. Special education teachers are more likely to initiate home contact with families of absent students, than general education teachers, and on rare occasions to conduct home visits themselves.

When asked about their daily attendance duties, both categories of teachers were evenly divided when it came to monitoring daily attendance and making referrals to attendance personnel, but 26 special education teachers stated that these duties include home contact and two make home visits. Fifteen

general education teachers state that they make home contact and no general education teachers stated that they initiate home visits for attendance reasons. Additional or specific attendance duties for teachers of self-contained classrooms include: filling out special attendance forms (n=6), monitoring students more closely (n=10), referral and discussion with special education staff (n=9), more home contact (n=9), and dealing with transportation issues (n=2).

The "three most common causes of absence" other than illness listed by all teachers are: parents simply keep the child home (n=97), truancy (n=48), and school transfer (n=31). Analysis of qualitative responses showed that the observations of special education and general education teachers were not markedly different, with the exception of transportation: eight special education teachers find this to be a cause of absence as opposed to one general education teacher. Thirty-two special education teachers discussed the impact of illness on their students as compared with 27 general education teachers, five special education teachers mentioned that parents keep their children out of school to babysit for siblings, while six general education teachers mentioned this cause of absence.

A subset of special education teachers (n=8) voiced the opinion that their pupils are more vulnerable to absence due to illness than other children. These include teachers of children in MIS III (basic communication needs), MIS IV (early childhood), and MIS V (functional academic/life skills) classes. This is

partly due to the underlying nature of some of the students' handicaps; e.g., Down's syndrome. In addition, children who receive multiple evaluations or services outside of school, or who must visit clinics because of health problems, lose school time because such appointments are often made during the school day.

When OREA researchers entered a study school, they selected a sample of students who had received 407 investigations in the previous year. Using this sample, the researcher attempted to match a case with a teacher in order to learn more about the teacher's involvement in this process. Alternatively, the researcher elicited information concerning a current 407 attendance investigation. Table III-8 summarizes the responses of the 59 teachers who were able to answer a series of questions concerning their involvement in an attendance investigation during the 1990-1991 or 1991-1992 school years.

Discussion of School-level Interviews

Several special education teachers and site supervisors cited incidents of children receiving erratic bus service. One teacher in District E considers transportation problems to be a number one cause of absence in her class. Aside from absence due to a student simply not being picked up as scheduled, bussing can affect attendance when students are required to travel long distances from their homes. This includes a situation where special education students are bussed from poor, non-white neighborhoods into an otherwise wealthier white school (District

F). Thus, special education students are nearly the only non-white students attending the school, since no other students are bussed in. Furthermore, students living a long distance from the school are less likely to receive home visits when they are absent: a school in District B arranged an inter-district transfer for one such student.

Special education personnel feel that they are unfairly penalized for the greater likelihood of special education students to be involved in transfers among schools or even districts than general education students. The sending school is penalized for each day that the student is not in attendance at the receiving school, but various administrative problems (including transportation requests) can delay a smooth transfer.

All sources of data reveal that both special education and general education children cope with a variety of social problems, including responsibilities at home, or negligent parents. Both parent and student interviews showed that this was an area of concern. One parent said: "Most of the students hate to stay away from school ... their parents don't get up on time to send them." A nine-year old child (in general education) in District C said that she would like someone to come to her home when she's absent so she could come to school more often instead of babysitting. (Parent and student characteristics are summarized in Tables III-9 and III-10.)

Throughout the study, we have seen contradictory attitudes toward the degree to which special education students are

vulnerable to social ills and the effect which this has on their attendance. It is very difficult to control for other sources of bias in the attitudes presented concerning the greater vulnerability of special education students to social factors, in comparison to other students. The attitude of general education and administrative personnel will affect special education students and their parents in their desire to attend school. If administration characterizes the special education youngster as "ridden with social evils," the student will be motivated very differently from a special education student attending a more supportive environment.

In sum, schools both across and within districts were variable in attendance rates, consciousness, and delivery of service. Unless a school was involved with A.I.D.P., there was a shortage of services--mainly phone calls, letters, and incentives or awards. Much depends on the conscientiousness of individual teachers.

The 407 Review

While the 407 shed some further light both on attendance process, and on the social issues previously discussed, it must be stated from the outset that the 407 only roughly reflects attendance consciousness in a school. The 407 is mainly a record of the basics of the attendance investigation, and not a detailed accounting of the process of attendance service. The form may be generated at the school-level, but the investigation itself is a district-level task.

Chancellor's Regulation A-210 states that a "Form 407 must be completed after school efforts" (emphasis theirs) issued when a student is absent without excuse for ten days. In addition, regulations require that 407s be issued for known truants, no shows, transfers, non-returning suspensions, students without immunizations, and long-term absentees (L.T.A.s) after varying lengths of time. The only difference between special education and general education regulations as of 1990-1991 were for:*

- Students who fail to report to a new site within five days of authorization.
- Chronic truants over the age of 17, a situation which generally did not appl y to the C.S.D. portion of the study.

(See Appendix I for a summary of the circumstances under which a Form 407 is to be generated.)

There does appear to be some correlation between lack of records and lack of service. In District C, OREA researchers, in four of seven instances, could not find any evidence of 1990-91 407s. In one case, a researcher was able to glean enough information from the consecutive register to obtain a sample of students who had received 407 investigations. While this district has the highest overall attendance rate in our study, an intermediate school proved to have the greatest number of 407 requests for any school in any district. However, the attendance teacher's portion of the 407 was not filled in and

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* Source: "A Principal's Guide to Attendance and Pupil Accounting Procedures", p.29, Fall 1990.

therefore that information could not be included in our study.

One school in District E and one in District F had no 407s from last year, because it was claimed that none were needed. Researchers in District F also found that the 407s for two other schools were simply "not locatable." It should be pointed out that both of these districts have undergone some administrative restructuring in the past year.

Tables III-11 through III-17 summarize OREA's analysis of C.S.D.-level Form 407s. 407 investigations may begin anywhere from the first day that a known truant is absent to thirty days for a "September no-show" who is not investigated until the attendance teacher "clears the register." District D, with its reliance on paraprofessionals actually writes 407s fairly late since the family assistant makes the first home visit around the 10th day (sometimes sooner), attempts a resolution through the school, and then calls in the district if there is no such resolution. However, this may result in students actually receiving more services than in districts where a school aide writes up a 407, then sends it over to the district, and waits for the attendance teacher to completing the investigation.

Overall, the proportion of special education students who receive 407 investigations reflect the proportion of special education students in a school. In addition, referring to Appendix D there is a strong relationship between poor special education attendance, and a greater number of 407s generated for special education students.

By and large, the greater the disparity between special and general education attendance, the greater the factor by which special education students are represented in the total 407 sample, reaching more than five times the rate of general education referrals among the elementary schools. This was true across districts. Four elementary schools did not meet this pattern: one (E5) of which shows evidence of a possibly serious lack of special education follow-up. On the other hand, special education students in B3, D1 and D2 had higher rates of attendance than their general education counterparts. In these schools, understandably, no special education 407s were written in 1990-91.

The middle schools are interesting in that they portray more extreme data. The rate by which 407s are generated for special education youngsters can be quite high: e.g., 45.5 percent of register in C12, 20 percent of the register in E12, or at a factor of as much as 20 times the rate for general education students. On the other hand, four of the ten (as opposed to four out of 25 for elementary schools) generated 407s at a lower rate for special education students, even where the special education attendance rates are 0.8 to 7.4 percent lower than for general education students.

Anecdotal comments on the 407s revealed additional findings in the following areas:

- Family composition - Interviews conducted with a wide variety of relatives showed that students may be changing residences when under the care of different adults.

- Use of child welfare or legal authorities - Information on the 407 supports interview findings which show that attendance teachers have a great deal of involvement with child welfare authorities, family court, and to some degree, criminal justice personnel.

- Creativity of the attendance teacher - Attendance teachers do attempt to contact multiple persons, such as building and real estate workers, friends, neighbors, or storekeepers, in order to track down the whereabouts of a youngster.

- Social issues are mentioned, including, once again, young children staying home to deal with family responsibilities. (This was one reason for investigators' involvement with child welfare authorities over educational neglect.) Also, travel to the country of origin for extended vacations is noted.

No 407s stated that a student was absent because of bussing issues. This may be due to the fact that bussing does not actually result in extensive days of absence, or that when bussing delays are known to be the reason for the absence, a 407 is not generated.

On the other hand, both interview and 407 data reveal that many investigated students are absent legally. Although, we have not systematically investigated the degree to which poor health services, or inadequate access to medical and social services impinge upon a student's return to school, these cases may drain time from the investigation of truants. For example, we reviewed a repeat 407 for a student with leukemia. It was apparent that two different attendance teachers visited that youngster's home, and that the second one had no record of the results of the first investigation. This would seem to be an inefficient deployment of limited staff. There was no evidence that the district

attempted to contact the child's medical provider in order to help the child to receive appropriate instruction at home, in the hospital, or to support the child back in school.

In sum, the 407 investigation, while considered important, is not utilized optimally. There is an overall lack of integration between the school and the district, and between the classroom teacher and attendance staff. This is partially alleviated for the special education student through the presence of the special education site supervisor who provides liaison with attendance staff; as well as, the greater likelihood of personal intervention by the teacher.

The Attendance Plan

OREA requested attendance plans for each study school or district for 1990-91, and if these were not obtainable at the school or district-level, for 1991-92.

- District B focuses on decreasing "unnecessary work" for the Attendance Teachers by increasing the number and role of Family Assistants/Junior Neighborhood Workers in most schools. These paraprofessionals are to receive training through a university-linkage. A.I.D.P. and the C.B.O.s are included in the district attendance committee. Each school is required to have an attendance committee and a designated attendance coordinator.

- District C mentions training and targets its scarce services to all students. Its district-wide committee on attendance was in formation at the time the plan was written.

- District D has a more comprehensive plan which also mentions staff development and states that special education may "periodically involve extra services to meet their varied needs." There is a district social worker to help with the re-entry of chronic absentees and clearly defined roles for both school and district level attendance personnel.

- District E requires that the school Attendance Coordinator be an assistant principal or teacher; however, this was one of the districts where school aides were discovered to be fulfilling this role in some of the study schools. Training is to be held four times a year and an interviewee did describe a rather extensive training schedule which includes related issues (e.g., identifying abuse and neglect).

- District F regularly distributes attendance percentages generated from A.T.S. to supervisors and attendance personnel for analysis and planning of attendance policy in district schools.

School-level plans, in the cases where they existed, were by and large incomplete. District B did not submit any plans to OREA, district C submitted three plans, district D submitted five plans, district E submitted four plans, and district F submitted one current plan. Plans focused on the following areas: recent attendance statistics, A.T.S. procedures, and the formation of an attendance committee. Only two schools, an elementary school and a middle school, both in District D, showed a comprehensive understanding of preventive services. The researcher for the elementary school did find this to be a concerned environment with a "hands-on" principal; the middle school had a less congenial atmosphere.

Conclusion to C.S.D. Level Findings

Serious problems do exist in the delivery of attendance services in the community school districts. If anything, special education students receive somewhat more service than general education students. This may be incidental to the structure of special education: smaller classes, more staff, and mandated related services, rather than due to attendance services targeted

to special education students. In the concluding chapter, we will discuss some of our overall recommendations for further clarifying the reasons for poor special education attendance rates, and for strengthening attendance services to all students.

HIGH SCHOOL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

OREA researchers conducted interviews and Form 407 data retrieval in ten high schools, two in each of the borough superintendencies. Again, we sought to include a range of 407 experience in 1990-91 by using the proportion of students absent for ten or more days as a predictor of the need for 407 service (Table III-19; see also Figure III-1 for aggregate differences between general and special education absence). We did not include any alternative high schools, nor did we include specialized high schools; otherwise, academic-comprehensive (n=7), educational option (n=2) and vocational (n=1) high schools were included in this portion of the study. This section of the report will follow the same format as for the Community School Districts.

Superintendency-level Interviews

OREA researchers interviewed the following administrative staff in each of the five borough superintendencies: the Superintendent (n=4), the District Supervising Attendance Officer (n=5), and the Executive Assistant for Special Education (n=5).* The superintendent delegates attendance and special education

*The position titles used in this section of the report were provided by the respondents and may not reflect their actual civil service designations.

responsibilities to the latter two persons respectively. All three of these persons are involved with attendance planning along with Project Achieve Coordinators (n=3), Guidance Supervisors (n=1), Directors of Funded programs (n=2), and other attendance supervisory personnel (n=2).

Two of the High School District Supervising Attendance Officers (herein referred to as attendance officer) held these positions for less than one year, while three have held that post for between four and six years. They are responsible for supervising and training the attendance teachers (who are located in the schools, rather than in the district office as was true for the lower grades). Other duties include: analyzing and maintaining attendance data (n=4), liaison with schools or special programs (e.g., Project Achieve) (n=2), staff development for non-attendance staff (n=2), reviewing and interpreting attendance plans (n=2), handling health and substance abuse problems (n=1), as well as the general monitoring and supervision of attendance (n=4).

All five of the attendance officers stated that they do review the Form 407, both as a check on the adequacy of investigations by attendance teachers, and in difficult cases, such as students in the "not found" category. Staff development is fairly frequent, as often as once a month, and is provided by a number of different sources. Topics range from statistics and procedures to suicide, child abuse, and neglect.

Students are followed through computerized and other

tracking systems. Many different school staff are responsible for identifying students with poor attendance: homeroom teachers, attendance teachers, attendance coordinators, attendance aides, family assistants, and guidance counselors; as well as, just about anyone else who has contact with students. For special education students this can include the assistant principal for special education, and special education house coordinators.

The Executive Assistants for Special Education (herein referred to as executive assistants), reflect a wide range of experience. One respondent was brand new to the position, and the others had held the position for anywhere from one to ten years. The executive assistants demonstrated a stronger concern and involvement with attendance issues than their counterparts on the community school district level. This includes both practical assistance and sensitizing personnel to the needs of special education youngsters. For example, four offices provide staff development in the area of attendance, or include attendance in training on other special education issues.

Special education students with histories of chronic absence receive a variety of services: transitional services for 9th or 10th graders, outreach programs, home visits from special education family workers, counseling, and incentives, along with monitoring or attendance teacher services provided to all students. However, one respondent said that services are targeted to at-risk students who are attending regularly rather

than to students who are in school sporadically.

According to the executive assistants, the assistant principal for special education is responsible for monitoring pupil attendance in the schools. An absence investigation may begin before a 407 is generated, and the following special education staff provide input into the investigation: special education attendance coordinator, homeroom teacher, and crisis intervention teacher. These persons, along with the S.B.S.T., guidance and school-wide attendance staff make recommendations during and after a 407 investigation. In addition, follow-up may be provided by family workers, work-study coordinator (one case), and the C.S.E. The decision to discharge a student involves the school attendance teacher, assistant principal, teachers, guidance, and possibly even the superintendent. The investigation, follow-up, and discharge of students will be discussed in more detail below.

Executive assistants were split as to whether the special education evaluation process has any effect on student attendance with two believing it does, two unsure, and one seeing no relation between evaluation and attendance. Three respondents said that decreasing attendance could signal a misplacement or the need for a re-evaluation. With regard to placement in bilingual or E.S.L. classes, three felt that there is a positive association between such placement and attendance, one stated that the association is negative, and one had no opinion. Where the association is beneficial, respondents said that

bilingual/E.S.L. programs are supportive, and that negative peer pressure is reduced. Yet, one respondent was concerned about the negative effect of being labelled both bilingual and special education.

Bussing is less of an issue in the high schools than in the community school districts. Even so, three of the respondents reported difficulties with transportation, but in one case this was related to fear of public transportation. Where bussing is a mandated service, routing problems and miscommunication were noted. In addition, OREA found evidence from various categories of respondents that the length of travel time, whether public transportation or school buses, negatively affects student punctuality and attendance. Two executive assistants also reported that architectural features may provide a barrier to regular school attendance, either in the mainstream or in self-contained classes. Thus, if a student has few choices of barrier-free schools, the problems of transportation and access are compounded.

With regard to completion of high school, executive assistants find that attendance history, academic achievement and rate of credit accumulation, social history, health history, and peer pressure all provide cues as to the student's future. It was felt, by and large, that students must be reached at an early age for drop out prevention with two critical points: early childhood, and the year of entry to high school. Attendance is influenced by parents, and early intervention can "help create

enthusiasm" in the children.

One executive assistant mentioned targeting middle school students because of the development of self-concept during these years. It was also mentioned that middle school policies which promote truants to high schools pass on the responsibility for their investigation and follow-up. A respondent observed that transitional year programs are important because students who complete tenth grade are more likely to finish school. Indeed, no respondent saw a reason for targeting later years, although interviews across categories showed many ideas for changing curriculum to meet the needs of students who are faring poorly in academic settings. In addition, special education respondents felt that their students generally receive more support in school and are less likely to leave out of passive neglect than general education students. Even so, it was brought out that school climate can be very subtly affected, and one executive assistant recommended that front office staff should be trained to "greet returning students properly."

While no respondent advocated completely separate attendance services for special education students, two of the executive assistants mentioned the need for additional services. One executive assistant would like to see an attendance teacher assigned to special education departments in all schools. Other recommendations include: more vocational programs, more family workers, and afternoon programs. Constraints against new or innovative services include: lack of money along with lack of

flexibility in its use, lack of "viable shops in the schools", lack of collaboration, lack of teachers, insufficient space, programming which includes "too many remediation classes", and according to one respondent, union regulations. (The conclusion of this report will discuss recommendations more fully.)

School-level Interviews

OREA researchers interviewed the building principal, the assistant principal for special education, and the attendance teacher for each study school, and the attendance coordinator for nine of the schools. In addition, approximately two special education and two general education teachers, one special education and one general education student, and a small sample of parents were interviewed.

There were no high school principals with less than one year of experience, unlike the lower grades. The average amount of time in this position was four years. The principal's role in attendance is described as: identifying problems and suggesting solutions, looking at what works elsewhere, strategic planning, providing resources, acting as a facilitator, and monitoring for accountability. In addition, the principal may become involved in suspensions, reviews monthly attendance and truancy reports, monitors overall attendance, coordinates activities for "at risk" students, gives awards to students with good attendance, and "spearheads initiatives." Each respondent stated that the school does have an active attendance committee which covers issues relating to policies and procedures, specific strategies,

accounting, and record-keeping, dealing with L.T.A.s, discharges, and "any problem that a person might bring to the committee's attention."

Forty percent of the principals said that they would get involved in a 407 investigation either as a review of L.T.A. and discharge procedures, or in especially problematic situations; e.g., suspected child abuse, or complaints from the community about a particular student. While the building principal has authority over policy, the actual details of attendance monitoring falls within the domain of the attendance coordinator. This person is either an assistant principal, or under the supervision of an A.P., and spends anywhere from 12 to 27.5 hours a week on attendance (average=19.4). The attendance coordinator interacts with almost every category of school staff, especially the attendance teacher, principal, and guidance counselor. OREA discussed the basics of attendance-taking and absence identification with the school attendance coordinator.

Teachers, usually the second or fourth period subject teacher, are most commonly assigned the task of attendance-taking. One study school takes attendance via a front door scanner. Students must present their identification cards for insertion into the scanning device. The cards cost five dollars and must be paid for if lost. The OREA researcher observed students leaving the building when confronted regarding lack of an identification card. While the school is located in a high crime neighborhood and there are security reasons for the system,

it is obviously detrimental to maintaining optimal attendance.

Home contact is usually begun by aides or other paraprofessionals. This is most commonly accomplished through phone calls or post cards. In 60 percent of the schools, calls and/or cards are computer-generated, with 60 percent of the schools providing preventive or wake-up calls as well.

High schools were more likely than elementary or middle schools to target particular groups of students for specific attention, although their reasons were vague; i.e., special education students "need close attention." Eight of the nine attendance coordinators believed that there are particular issues unique to special education students which affect their attendance. Such issues include transportation problems, more social and medical problems, and less control of behavior. One respondent stated that special education students are not challenged enough.

The attendance coordinator does not have a major role in the 407 investigation. In five cases, the coordinator does review 407s before referring them to the attendance teacher. OREA interviewed the attendance teacher for contextual information on the 407 investigation. The attendance teacher is directly under the supervision of the attendance officer at the borough superintendency, but is also responsible to the building principal of the school where s/he is located. Forty percent of the respondents were assigned to only one high school, while sixty percent split their time. Thus, attendance personnel are

better integrated into the life of the school at the high school level than at the C.S.D. level. Seven of the ten attendance teachers stated that they provide input into the generation of attendance policy or procedures.

Ninety percent of the schools make referrals for absence investigations from the computer-generated 407s (one high school in the study was not computerized as were none of the elementary or middle schools), as well as verbal referrals from other school personnel. Other sources of referral include 407s generated by hand, community referral, police or transit referral, parent inquiry, and referrals from other districts. Seven of the schools may begin an absence investigation before a 407 has been generated (this does not necessarily include a home visit). Family workers, special education attendance coordinators, guidance staff, teachers, or administrative personnel conduct such preliminary investigations. Table III-19 displays the range of time which elapses before beginning an absence investigation in situations covered by the Chancellor's regulations.

High school attendance teachers were more likely to vary criteria for prioritizing their investigations than their counterparts in the lower grades. Students who may receive earlier attention include: articulating students (n=3), special education students (n=3), students awaiting over-17 discharge (n=2), LEP students (n=1), students in temporary housing (n=1), known truants (n=2), and no shows (n=2). In prioritizing investigations, attendance teachers sometimes follow directly

opposite strategies; for example, while most seek out younger students first, others pay attention to seniors or those who "need only a few credits to graduate." Some attendance teachers favor early intervention (look for a pattern and "try to handle before [problems] develop"), while others seek out the L.T.A.s first. Thus, it appears that high school attendance teachers allow themselves some leeway and creativity in how they proceed, although two respondents mentioned that priorities are determined by the principal, guidance, and "social services."

When dealing with uncooperative students and parents, high school attendance teachers function similarly to community school district attendance teachers. This includes using everything from "friendliness", "tough talk", and "empty threats" to referrals for educational neglect, PINS petitions, and family court. However, many more high school students are eligible for over-17 discharges than middle school students. In addition, the kinds of social problems which high school attendance teachers encounter differ somewhat in type and in degree. High school students are more likely to be involved in employment which interferes with school (e.g., night work which prevents the youngster from awakening on time), child care for one's own children, and the need for prenatal care, as well as, situations where students are setting up their own households.

High school attendance teachers consider the availability of resources, and the student's history, age, employability, interests, and abilities when making recommendations for services

for students with poor attendance, or who are at risk of truanting, or even leaving school entirely. These recommendations are academic in scope (G.E.D. or class changes), health care or guidance-related, or may be practical ("clothing for student to come to school"). Classifications for closing a case include returning to school, attendance at another school, or placement, discharge, moving, student "not found", institutionalization, or death.

In two cases, attendance teachers report special education students receive more attention because of the larger number of staff serving a smaller population. Seven respondents mentioned the Chancellor's requirement for an exit interview and parental signature for over-17 special education discharges, and "greater effort in home visits and family contacts" than for general education students. Table III-19 summarizes further information attendance teachers provided regarding the relative success of attendance intervention for general education and special education students.

The assistant principal for special education (herein referred to as A.P.) provides on-site supervision for the total special education program. OREA interviewed one A.P. in each of the study high schools reflecting six months to ten years of experience. Attendance functions may be delegated to a special education attendance coordinator, but in all cases the A.P. continued to demonstrate an involvement in, and awareness of, attendance issues.

Table III-20 summarizes A.P. responses concerning attendance monitoring, referral, and follow-up. Special education representation in attendance policy planning was high with 90 percent representation on the school's attendance committee. Three respondents stated that there are minor variations for subpopulations within special education centered around greater staffing and follow-up. These groups are: MIS II students, students in temporary housing, LEP students, and known truants. Table III-21 compares attitudinal responses of the A.P.s for special education with attendance teachers and attendance coordinators concerning integration or specialization of attendance services for special education students. A.P.s were more likely to advocate for combined or supplemental services, than the other two categories.

The bulk of attendance problems are first picked up by homeroom or subject teachers, with the most common cues being several days of consecutive absence or patterned absence. Parent notification, patterned cutting, and remarks from other students also signal an attendance problem. These and other attendance problems come to the A.P.'s attention, most commonly from teachers, but from a broad range of school, special education, community and family sources, as well.

All respondents stated that a preliminary attendance investigation may begin before the 407 is generated. The special education paraprofessional, teacher, or attendance coordinator is designated as the person responsible for the preliminary

investigation. Eight respondents said that this consists of a phone call home on the day of absence, and three said it could entail a home visit. Other preliminary procedures were more vague including letters home, verbal contact with students' peers, or a review of computer scan sheets and roll books. Once a 407 investigation is undertaken, the most common recommendations were for various changes in program; e.g., transfer to vocational or alternative settings. This aspect of the 407 investigation will be discussed further below.

OREA hypothesized that the role of the teacher in attendance follow-up would diverge more greatly between special education and general education in the high schools because of the differences in staffing and class size. A sample of nineteen special education, eleven general education, and eight teachers with mixed classes revealed that this was the case, especially with regard to absence investigations. Eight special education and two teachers of mixed classes had been involved in such cases (in two instances the 407 status was unknown to the teacher). Only one general education teacher had been involved in an absence investigation (which did not, to his knowledge, involve a 407).

Involvement with 407 cases reflected teacher observations concerning causes of absence (see Table III-22). 68.4 percent of special education teachers felt that their students were more vulnerable to the various causes of absence as compared with the general population, while only 11.1 percent of general education

and 16.7 percent of the mixed population teachers believed this was true. However, 50 percent of the teachers in the two latter categories stated that they do not know if special education students are particularly vulnerable to both lawful and unlawful absence.

In addition to school staff, six parents and sixteen students were interviewed. Two-thirds of the parents had a youngster for whom a Form 407 had been generated in the previous school year, and half were active in the P.T.A., or other school activities. Five of the six parents felt it was a good idea for school staff to visit a family's home although only two had received such a visit. The one who objected saw this as an invasion of privacy. One of the parents said her child had received counseling for truancy, but couldn't say whether or not this was helpful. Parental suggestions for improvement include: more staff, more rational rules (e.g., don't send students home for tardiness!), better programming and placements, more teachers and smaller classes, better communication, and changing teacher attitudes. It was also felt that schools should try to keep 17-year olds in regular high school rather than directing them to G.E.D. or other alternative programs.

The sixteen student interviews included seven students who had Form 407s on file, and nine students who were in special education. They ranged from ninth through 12th graders, and ages 15 through 19. Fifteen of the students said that their school contacts their homes when absent, mainly via phone call or post

card. Of the seven students who said that their attendance had improved this year, increased motivation was the major factor. In one case, this was because of participation in a work-study program. The obverse was true for the five who said that their attendance had not improved--one student wants to transfer, and another considers school to be too easy.

Eleven students stated that their school does try to help youngsters who have a problem with attendance come to school. Yet, two students said that there is no follow-up on absences and that forging parent notes is common practice. The students either had no experience with home visits (n=13), or did not discuss this question. Nine found the idea objectionable, but the four who considered this a positive idea felt that such visits express the school's concern for its students.

Review of High School 407s

OREA researchers reviewed a total of 690 Form 407s in the ten study high schools. The researchers sampled every third special education 407 and every ninth general education 407 revealing the following breakdown: 479 general education, 180 special education, and three "other" (or anomalous) cases. The special education students were divided into MIS I (n=139 or 77.2 percent), MIS II (n=26 or 14.4 percent), and indeterminable program service categories (n=15 or 8.8 percent). 47.2 percent of the general education 407s were for ninth graders, 29.6 percent for tenth graders, 13.6 percent for 11th graders, 7.1 percent for 12th graders, and 2.5 percent of the general

education 407s could not be classified according to grade.

Referring to Appendix E the rate of 407 referral* for special education high school students showed the following pattern: 60 percent of the schools had a higher rate of referral for special education than for general education students; in 20 percent of the schools the rates were similar; and in 20 percent of the schools special education students had a lower rate of referral than would be expected based on their representation in the student body and overall attendance rate.

Unfortunately, despite the high level of computerization, so little information was filled out on most 407s that it is difficult to undertake a complete analysis of the data. Tables III-23 through III-25 present information which was fairly consistently noted on the 407: days absent during the school year up to the time of opening the case, days absent during the month that the case was opened, absence classification, disposition of the case, and discharge codes.

Information on the dates reported and assigned suggest that there are peak periods during which attendance teachers investigate student absences. The number of days which a student is absent when the case is opened may be misleading in that a lag of one or two months can ensue before the attendance teacher actually establishes student or family contact, or even begins

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* In the high schools, the possibility of multiple 407s for the same student was even greater than in the community school districts, because of the use of computers to generate the 407 at a pre-set number of days of absence.

the investigation at all. Some attendance teachers consciously hesitate to put full information concerning students into a public record. With regard to routine issues, attendance teachers or coordinators report that they spend a good deal of time sieving through multiply-generated forms before beginning the investigation.

Despite the incompleteness of the Form 407s which were reviewed for this study, certain social indicators became apparent as they did in the community school districts. In those cases where anecdotal information was noted, this included an inability to reach the family or the student (n=25), or parental unawareness of student absence (n=37). On the other hand, only two 407s contained information regarding PINS or family court involvement, eight noted involvement with custody or probation, and in three cases the student was removed from his/her home. Three 407s noted that the students were found to be home caring for family members, and seven were caring for their own children. However, other sources of data reveal that such problems are more pressing than the anecdotal sections of the 407s have shown.

In 273 cases where OREA could make a determination of the types of recommendations made by attendance teachers, counseling was overwhelmingly favored (32.6 percent), along with close supervision (20.9 percent). Various types of academic changes were commonly recommended including alternative settings or G.E.D. programs (18.6 percent) and transfers to other schools or programs (19.2 percent). However, 22.8 percent of these 273

cases simply called for the discharge of the student. There were only two requests (0.9 percent) for special education re-evaluation in the subsample of 273 cases with handwritten recommendations. No attendance teacher noted a report for educational neglect although two did request a PINS petition. The sparseness of handwritten statements on the 407 supports statements made by school staff during site visits that the 407 is not a key document in the actual provision of attendance services. Of course, lack of documentation may point to lack of service overall, or simply that reliance on computer-generated documents does not encourage the active writing of statements on the Form 407.

Review of Attendance Plans

Attendance plans on the high school level were far more professional in quality and detailed in scope than on the community school district level. However, we did not obtain plans from three of the superintendency offices, and for three of the schools.* (One high school submitted its safety plan to OREA.) On the other hand, some schools have begun to write special education attendance plans in the 1991-92 school year. These are intended to supplement, not to replace, the general plan.

Conclusion to High School Level Findings

The differences between the high schools and the community

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* It should be pointed out that if such plans do exist, but are not readily accessible, they are not providing useful guides to the schools involved.

school districts involve both differences in the degree to which a problem exists, and also in the type of problem or attendance-related issue. This can have a two-way effect when it comes to reaching students and providing service. For example, parents have less control over their youngsters, but a few respondents felt that this affords the school the opportunity to have a greater impact on the student.

Verbally, OREA was told of more interaction with the criminal justice system on behalf of the student, although this did not show up strikingly on the 407 review. The number of over-age students, and finding appropriate alternatives for students who no longer wish to remain in high school becomes increasingly pressing with each year a student remains in school. With more inter-school transfers, there is also a greater opportunity for loss of educational time, or even of allowing the student to fall through the cracks completely.

In addition, students are far-flung, perhaps not even in the same borough as their school, and therefore home visits are more difficult. While computer-generation of 407s aids tremendously in keeping track of students with multiple consecutive or patterned absences, it also requires the burdensome task of "sieving through a big pile of them", since often 407s are generated for excused absences. Even so, with regard to excuse for absence, high school students are better able to circumvent normal routes; i.e., they are more likely to "fake" excuses.

Despite these caveats, the high schools are far better

organized than the community school districts. Attendance teachers are more numerous, better integrated into the life of the school, and better supported by their districts than their counterparts in the lower grades. High school district supervising attendance officers consider the disparity between the community school districts and the high schools to be a major contributing factor to the difficulties which must be met at the high school level.

Overall, more attention is paid to special education students' absences in the high schools, than to those of general education students. Yet, the discrepancies between attendance rates for the two groups continues to widen with each level of schooling. Although, OREA was not charged with discovering the reasons for these discrepancies, insights which our researchers developed, as well as, recommendations will be discussed in the final chapter of this report.

TABLE III-1

PROPORTION OF STUDENTS WITH 10 OR MORE DAYS OF UNEXCUSED ABSENCE WITHIN SAMPLE SCHOOLS[a]

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

School	% All Students 10+ Absences	% Special Ed Students with 10+ Absences
Elementary		
F3	0.50	2.60
C5	0.98	3.90
F2	1.07	9.20
E1	1.12	4.40
E4	1.13	2.90
F5	1.19	3.60
C4	1.35	1.75
F4	1.37	2.60
C1	1.44	6.70
B1	1.69	13.60
C2	1.80	3.40
E3	1.80	5.90
C3	1.94	2.70
E5	2.05	9.50
D5	2.31	22.70
B4	2.33	10.10
D4	2.67	31.40
E2	2.76	5.60
B2	2.90	1.00
D3	3.07	8.50
B5	3.52	20.00
D1	4.28	40.00
B3	5.24	6.40
F1	5.31	8.90
D2	8.19	10.50
Middle		
D12	1.29	8.70
F12	1.55	6.45
E11	1.98	2.00
C12	2.15	4.10
C11	2.41	9.80
E12	3.67	11.40
F11	5.77	10.30
D11	6.48	14.80
B12	6.85	10.37
B11	10.96	9.80

[a] The data was supplied through the A.T.S. system.

TABLE III-2

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
KEY RESPONSES BY DISTRICT[a]

Response Category(ies)	DISTRICT LETTER B	C	D	E	F	TOTAL N	%
Respondent's Position Title							
Superintendent		x				1	20
Deputy Superintendent	x		x			2	40
Acting Superintendent					x	1	20
Dir. of Pupil Personnel Services				x		1	20
Do you have a District Attendance/Pupil Personnel Committee?							
Yes	x	x	x	x		4	80
No					x		20
						5	100
Does this district conduct staff development on attendance related issues?							
Yes	x		x	x		3	60
No		x			x	2	40
Does attendance policy or procedure vary with grade level?							
Yes			x	x		2	40
No	x	x			x	3	60
Does attendance policy or procedure vary for students with special needs?							
Yes					x	1	20
No	x	x	x	x		4	80

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff.

TABLE III-3

SUMMARY OF SELECTED RESPONSES OF DISTRICT ATTENDANCE COORDINATORS BY DISTRICT[a]

RESPONSE CATEGORY(IES)	DISTRICT B	C	D	E	F	TOTAL[b] N	%
What factors are accounted for in district level attendance planning?							
Chancellor's mandate			x			1	17
Cumulative absentee report				x		1	17
Transportation problems					x	1	17
Availability of resources/funds	x				x	2	33
Other			x			1	17
Are any additional resources allocated to special education students?							
Yes				x		1	20
No	x	x	x		x	4	80
What differences exist, if any, in procedures between special education and regular education students?							
More staff	x					1	17
Sp. ed. can't be discharged without permission.	x					1	17
More follow up for sp. ed.				x		1	17
None		x	x		x	3	50

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff.

[b] Total represents the number and percent of respondents for each response category.

TABLE III-3 (cont'd)

SUMMARY OF SELECTED RESPONSES OF
DISTRICT ATTENDANCE COORDINATORS
BY DISTRICT[a]

RESPONSE CATEGORY(IES)	DISTRICT B	C	D	E	F	TOTAL[b] N	%
	Does attendance policy or procedure vary for: Grade level?						
Yes	x		x	x		3	60
No		x			x	2	40
	Special Education Students?						
Yes						-	-
No	x	x	x	x	x	5	100
	Students in temporary housing?						
Yes	x				x	2	40
No		x	x	x		3	60
	LEP Students?						
Yes							
No	x	x	x	x	x	5	100
	AIDP Students						
Yes	x					1	20
No		x	x	x	x	4	80
	When is it necessary to submit the 407 form?						
5-10 days	x	x				2	40
Family Assistant unsuccessful				x		1	20
When school has reached a dead end.				x	x	2	40

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff.

[b] Total represents the number and percent of respondents for each response category.

TABLE III-3 (cont'd)

SUMMARY OF SELECTED RESPONSES OF
DISTRICT ATTENDANCE COORDINATORS
BY DISTRICT[a]

RESPONSE CATEGORY(IES)	DISTRICT B	C	D	E	F	TOTAL[b] N	%
	Who is responsible for following up on recommendations?						
Guidance Counselor	x	x	x			3	23
Teachers	x					1	08
Nurse	x	x				2	15
Dist. Attendance Teacher		x	x			2	15
Dist. Attendance Coordinator			x	x		2	15
Special Ed. Staff		x	x	x		3	23

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff.

[b] Total represents the number and percent of respondents for each response category.

TABLE III-4

SUMMARY OF SELECTED RESPONSES OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION BY DISTRICT[a]

RESPONSE CATEGORY(IES)	DISTRICT B	C	D	E	F	TOTAL N	%[b]
Do you have input in generating district-level attendance policy for special education?							
Yes	x	x			x	3	60
No			x	x		2	40
Have you experienced difficulties regarding transportation services for students?							
Yes	x		x	x	x	4	80
No		x				1	20
Does this result in a decrease in attendance?							
Yes	x			x	x	3	60
No			x			1	20
N/A		x				1	20
Is it better to gear attendance services to special ed. students or to integrate special ed. students into regular ed. services?							
Specialize						0	--
Integrate	x	x	x		x	4	80
Depends				x		1	20

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff.

[b] Total represents the number and percent of respondents for each response category.

TABLE III-4 (CONT'D.)

SUMMARY OF SELECTED RESPONSES OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION BY DISTRICT[a]

RESPONSE CATEGORY(IES)	DISTRICT B	C	D	E	F	TOTAL N	%[b]
	What are the programs/services provided by your district that are targeted to special education students at risk of dropping out?						
Same as for general ed (e.g., AIDP)	x		x	x		3	60
Special projects or curricula (e.g., Healthy Choices, SHARE)			x	x	x	3	60
After-school counseling for MIS II students					x	1	20
Outside agencies			x			1	20
N/A--young students with relatively good attendance		x				1	20

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff.

[b] Total represents the number and percent for each response category.

TABLE III-5

SUMMARY OF SELECTED DISTRICT ATTENDANCE TEACHERS' RESPONSES BY DISTRICT[a]

RESPONSE CATEGORY(IES)	DISTRICT[b] B	B'	C	E	E'	F	TOTAL N	% [c]
	How do you decide which students to investigate first?							
History of truancy.					x		1	17
Unexplained absence for 3+ days.						x	1	17
Staff says there is a severe problem.			x			x	2	33
Citizen complaint.						x	1	17
Child's safety in jeopardy.	x	x					2	33
Varies				x	x		2	33
	Does criteria for investigation vary according to whether a student is:							
	In a particular grade level?							
Yes	x			x			2	33
No		x	x		x	x	4	67
	A special education student?							
Yes				x	x		2	33
No	x	x	x			x	4	67
	A LEP student?							
Yes							0	0
No	x	x	x	x	x	x	6	100
	A student in temporary housing?							
Yes		x				x	2	33
No			x	x	x		3	67
Don't Know	x						1	17
	A student in another population with special needs?							
Yes	x						1	17
No		x	x	x	x	x	5	83

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff.

[b] Based on availability on the day OREA visited district offices, interviews were conducted with 2 attendance teachers in districts B and E each, one in districts C and F each, and none in district D.

[c] Total represents the number and percent of respondents for each response category.

TABLE III-5 (CONT'D.)

SUMMARY OF SELECTED DISTRICT ATTENDANCE TEACHERS' RESPONSES BY DISTRICT[a]

RESPONSE CATEGORY(IES)	DISTRICT[b] B	B'	C	E	E'	F	TOTAL N	% [c]
	What kind of follow-up occurs to ensure that 407 recommendations are carried out?							
Daily contact with child's home.				x	x		2	33
Contact with sp. ed. site supe.					x		1	17
Very little.	x						1	17
School notifies attendance teacher.			x				1	17
Issue another 407.			x				1	17
None.		x				x	2	33
	What do you do when students and/or parents do not comply with the recommendations made as a result of the attendance investigation?							
Refer to guidance counselor.	x	x		x	x		4	67
Recommend contact child welfare.		x	x	x	x		4	67
Multi school staff provide contact.		x	x		x		3	50
Contact probation officer.					x		1	17
PINS petition/ Family Court.	x		x	x	x	x	5	83

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff.

[b] Interviews were conducted with 2 attendance teachers in districts B and E each, one in districts C and F each, and none in district D.

[c] Total represents the number and percent of respondents for each response category.

TABLE III-5 (CONT'D.)

SUMMARY OF SELECTED DISTRICT ATTENDANCE TEACHERS' RESPONSES BY DISTRICT[a]

RESPONSE CATEGORY(IES)	DISTRICT[b] B	B'	C	E	E'	F	TOTAL N	% [c]
	When comparing the attendance investigations of special education and regular education students, which ones have a better outcome?							
Regular education	x			x			2	33
Special education		x	x				2	33
Don't Know					x	x	2	33
	Have you found that parents of general education students are typically more or less cooperative than parents of special education students in returning their children to school?							
More cooperative		x			x	x	3	50
Less cooperative			x				1	17
Same	x			x			2	33
	In your opinion, is it better to gear attendance services to special education students or to integrate special education students into regular education services?							
Specialize		x			x		2	33
Integrate	x		x	x		x	4	67

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff.

[b] Interviews were conducted with 2 attendance teachers in districts B and E each, one in districts C and F each, and none in district D.

[c] Total represents the number and percent of respondents for each response category.

TABLE III-6

INITIATION OF ATTENDANCE INVESTIGATION
BY SCHOOL-BASED INVESTIGATORS
FOR ALL STUDENTS

Reason for Absence[a]	# Days[b]	Frequency[c]	Percent[d]
Unexplained absences.	1 - 4	3	15.8
	5 - 6	6	31.6
	10	5	26.3
	15 - 16	2	10.5
	20	1	5.3
	Varies	1	5.3
	D/K	1	5.3
	Total responses	19	100.0
Transfer students who do not arrive on time.	Immediately	1	5.3
	5 - 7	4	21.0
	10	2	10.5
	Varies	1	5.3
	N/A	2	10.5
	D/K	6	31.6
	Total responses	19	100.0
Suspended students who do not return to school.	Immediately/1 d.	3	16.7
	2 - 5	3	16.7
	10 - 16	2	11.1
	N/A	1	5.5
	D/K	7	38.9
	Total responses	18	100.0
Known truants.	Immediately	1	4.8
	2 - 5	7	33.3
	10 - 17	3	14.3
	Varies	2	9.5
	N/A	1	4.8
	D/K	7	33.3
	Total responses	21	100.0

[a] The categories are those listed in the 1990 - 91 **Attendance Manual** as grounds for a 407 investigation.

[b] These are the # of days after which the respondents' schools begins an investigation of the student's reason for absence.

[c] Responses are based on answers to questions posed to the 22 respondents interviewed by OREA researchers.

[d] The total may be more than 100% due to the effect of rounding.

TABLE III-6 (Cont'd)

INITIATION OF ATTENDANCE INVESTIGATION--ALL STUDENTS

Reason for Absence[a]	# Days[b]	Frequency[c]	Percent[d]
September no-shows.	Immediately	1	5.5
	3 - 8	5	30.6
	10 - 15	4	22.2
	19 - 30	2	11.1
	Varies	1	5.5
	N/A	1	5.5
	D/K	5	30.6
	Total responses	18	100.0
Special ed. students who do not report to a new program.	Immediately	1	5.9
	2 - 5	3	17.6
	7 - 10	2	11.8
	15 - 17	2	11.8
	Varies	1	5.9
	N/A	1	5.9
	D/K	7	41.2
	Total responses	17	100.0
Lack immunization.	Immediately	1	5.9
	2 - 5	3	17.6
	8 - 10	2	11.8
	16 - 21	2	11.8
	N/A	1	5.9
	D/K	8	47.1
	Total responses	17	100.0
Frequent cutting or lateness.	Immediately	3	15.8
	3 - 5	5	26.3
	6 - 10	2	10.5
	N/A	4	21.1
	D/K	5	26.3
	Total responses	19	100.0

[a] The categories are those listed in the 1990 - 91 Attendance Manual as grounds for a 407 investigation.

[b] These are the # of days after which the respondents' schools begins an investigation of the student's reason for absence.

[c] Responses are based on answers to questions posed to the 22 respondents interviewed by OREA researchers.

[d] The actual total may equal more than 100% due to the effect of rounding.

TABLE III-7

SPECIAL EDUCATION SITE SUPERVISOR RESPONSES REGARDING KEY ATTENDANCE ISSUES--C.S.D.s

Site Supervisor involvement with problems which may require a 407 investigation.

Problem	Frequency[a]	Percent[b]
Unexplained absence.	23	25.0
September no-shows.	22	23.4
Transfer students who don't arrive on time.	19	20.1
Suspended students who don't return on time.	18	19.6
Students without immunization.	10	10.9
Total responses.	92	100.0

Number of Days after which initial parent contact is made.

Days	Frequency	Percent
One.	2	7.7
Two.	8	30.8
Three.	9	34.6
Four.	1	3.8
Five.	3	11.5
No response.	2	7.7
Total responses	26	100.0

Steps taken when parents do not respond to school contact.

Action	Frequency	Percent
Letters.	8	20.5
Phone calls.	6	15.4
Home visit.	9	23.1
407 investigation.	8	20.5
CWA referral.	4	10.3
Alert the attendance teacher.	2	5.1
Place on special attendance register (SAR) afrer 20 days.	1	2.6
N/A because special education parents are very cooperative.	1	2.6
Total responses	39	100.0

[a] Total is greater than the number of resondents due to multiple responses.
[b] The actual total may be greater than 100% due to the effect of rounding.

TABLE III-7 (Cont'd)

SPECIAL EDUCATION SITE SUPERVISOR RESPONSES REGARDING KEY ATTENDANCE ISSUES

At what point is the 407 actually generated?

Problem	# of days	Freq.	Percent
Beginning of all attendance investigations.	N/A	3	100.0
Unexcused absence.	Below 5	6	25.0
	5 - 9	4	16.7
	10 - 14	11	45.8
(Total=24)	unspecified	1	4.2
Sporadic absences.	Unsp'd	13	100.0
Noncompliant parents.	Below 5	3	27.3
	5 - 9	2	18.2
	10 - 14	5	45.4
	home visit fails	1	9.1
(Total=11)			
Transfer students who do not arrive.	Below 5	4	50.0
	5 - 9	1	12.5
	10 - 14	2	25.0
(Total=8)	unsp'd	1	12.5
September no-shows.	Below 5	4	33.3
	5 - 9	2	16.7
	10 - 14	2	16.7
	15 - 20	1	8.3
	above 20	1	8.3
(Total=12)	unsp'd	1	8.3
Non-returnee after suspension.	Below 5	4	44.4
	10 - 14	3	33.3
(Total=9)	unsp'd	2	22.2
Students without immunizations.	10 - 14	3	75.0
	unsp'd	1	25.0
(Total=4)			
Cutting or lateness.	15 incidents	2	40.0
(Total=5)	unsp'd	3	60.0
Other (per supervisor's discretion)	Varies	6	100.0

TABLE III-7 (Cont'd)

SPECIAL EDUCATION SITE SUPERVISOR RESPONSES REGARDING KEY ATTENDANCE ISSUES

Typical recommendations resulting from attendance investigations.

Recommendation	Frequency	Percent
School or program transfer.	7	15.9
Counseling.	9	20.4
CWA involvement.	6	13.6
Parent involvement program.	4	9.1
Health-related.	3	6.8
Follow-up at district.	3	6.8
Academic remediation.	2	4.5
Don't know.	2	4.5
Not applicable.[a]	4	9.1
Other.[b]	4	9.1
Total responses.	44	(100.0)

Persons responsible for making recommendations.

Title	Frequency	Percent
Special education site supervisor.	12	35.3
Special education staff.	5	14.7
Attendance teacher.	5	14.7
School attendance staff.	3	8.8
Guidance.	3	8.8
Teachers.	3	8.8
Don't know.	2	5.9
Not applicable.	1	2.9
Total responses.	34	(100.0)

[a] Includes such responses as not found and moved out of country.

[b] Includes such responses as notify bus company, retain on SAR, close supervision and advise to return.

TABLE III-9
HOMEROOM TEACHER INVOLVEMENT IN 407 ABSENCE INVESTIGATION
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Category	Number (%) of Responses General Ed.	Special Ed.
Teacher's Role		
Notify attendance staff.	14 (41.2)	17 (40.5)
Notify administration.	5 (14.7)	4 (9.5)
Notify guidance or special ed. support staff.	9 (26.5)	8 (19.0)
Home contact.	13 (38.2)	18 (42.9)
Home visit.	2 (5.9)	2 (4.8)
Community contact.	1 (2.9)	5 (11.9)
Dealt with 407 itself.	13 (38.2)	16 (38.1)
Total responses (%)[a]	**34 (100.0)**	**42 (100.0)**
Details of Case		
Child acts as family helper.	3 (10.3)	2 (5.0)
Student in temporary housing.	2 (6.9)	1 (2.5)
Student is emotionally withdrawn.	1 (3.4)	4 (10.0)
Student is aggressive.	3 (10.3)	3 (7.5)
Dysfunctional family.	14 (48.3)	14 (35.0)
Abusive family.	3 (10.3)	0 ----
CWA or courts are involved.	4 (13.8)	5 (12.5)
Can't locate parent or guardian.	4 (13.8)	5 (12.5)
Legitimate illness.	1 (3.4)	6 (15.0)
Other circumstances.[b]	7 (24.1)	17 (42.5)
Total responses (%)	**29 (100.0)**	**40 (100.0)**
Disposition (to the teacher' knowledge)		
Settled at district office.	1 (3.7)	2 (7.4)
Transferred to another school.	2 (7.4)	3 (11.1)
Referred to CWA.	2 (7.4)	0 ----
Resolved through the courts.	2 (7.4)	2 (7.4)
Student removed from the home.	3 (11.1)	2 (7.4)
Family moved.	4 (14.8)	2 (7.4)
Returned to school.	4 (14.8)	7 (25.9)
Unknown.	8 (29.6)	6 (22.2)
Closed without resolution.	1 (3.7)	3 (11.1)
Discharged.	5 (18.5)	0 ----
Other.	3 (11.1)	5 (18.5)
Total responses (%)	**27 (100.0)**	**27 (100.0)**

[a] Total may be greater than 100% due to the effect of rounding.

[b] This category includes cases where the circumstances are not known, are combinations of the problems listed above, or are extreme or unusual circumstances; e.g., a family which claims that there is a vendetta against their child.

TABLE III-9

SUMMARY OF PARENT RESPONSES

ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Summary of Parent Characteristics

Characteristic	Response Category	Frequency (%)
Child received a 407	Yes	2 (5.7)
	No	33 (94.3)
	Total	35 (100.0)
Child is in special education	Yes	6 (17.1)
	No	29 (82.9)
	Total	35 (100.0)
Child's grade	Kindergarten	2 (5.7)
	1 - 5	23 (60.0)
	6 - 8	10 (17.2)
	Total	35 (100.0)

Experience with Attendance Services or Interventions

Characteristic	Response Category	Frequency (%)
Have received attendance intervention	Psych. referral	2 (16.7)
	AIDP	2 (16.7)
	Phone calls	1 (8.3)
	Letters	1 (8.3)
	Incentives (child)	4 (33.3)
	Parent meeting	2 (16.7)
	Total responses	12 (100.0)
	Total cases	8 (22.9% of sample)

TABLE III-9 (Cont'd)

SUMMARY OF PARENT RESPONSES
ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Parental Attitudes toward home visits

Characteristic	Response Category	Frequency (%)
Ever received a home visit?	Yes	3 (8.6)
	No	31 (88.6)
	No response	1 (2.9)
	Total	35 (100.0)
Are home visits a good idea?	Yes	33 (97.1)
	No	1 (2.9)
	No response	1 (2.9)
	Total	35 (100.0)
Reason	Phone and mail can fail	12 (32.4)
	Better communication	1 (2.7)
	Shows school's concern	8 (21.6)
	Understand family/home	13 (35.1)
	Work with over-protective parents	1 (2.7)
	Verify address	1 (2.7)
	Other	1 (2.7)
	Total responses	37 (100.0)
	Total cases	31

TABLE III-10

SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSES--C.S.D.s

Summary of Student Characteristics

Characteristic	Response Category	Frequency	(%)
Received a Form 407?	Yes	13	(28.3)
	No	31	(67.4)
	Unknown	2	(4.3)
	Total	46	(100.0)
Special education	Yes	14	(30.4)
	No	29	(63.0)
	Missing Data	3	(6.5)
	Total	46	(100.0)
Grade	3 - 5	20	(43.5)
	6 - 8	26	(56.5)
	Total	46	(100.0)
Age	8 - 11	25	(54.4)
	12 - 15	21	(45.6)
	Total	46	(100.0)

Student Experience with Attendance Services

Experience	Response Category	Frequency	(%)
Received home visit	Yes	15	(32.6)
	No	28	(60.9)
	Don't Know	2	(4.3)
	No response	1	(2.2)
	Total	46	(100.0)
Participated in attendance-related activity	Yes	28	(60.9)
	No	13	(28.3)
	No response	5	(10.9)
	Total	46	(100.0)
Can activities help?	Yes	32	(69.6)
	No	3	(6.5)
	Don't Know	5	(10.9)
	Missing Data	6	(13.1)
	Total	46	(100.0)

TABLE III-11

1991-92 407 STUDY

407s FILED FOR C.S.D. SAMPLE[a]
BY SERVICE TYPE, TOTAL REGISTER
AND SCHOOL LEVEL

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

	TOTAL REGISTER[b]		407s[c]	
SERVICE TYPE	AVERAGE RATE OF ATTEN-DANCE	REGISTER	NUMBER FILED[d]	PERCENT OF REGISTER
General education	90.7	16,712	357	2.1
MIS I	88.8	616	16	2.6
MIS II	86.7	150	9	6.0
MIS III	89.5	50	1	2.0
MIS IV	84.1	242	5	2.1
MIS V	86.2	109	4	3.7
Other sp. ed service categories	84.9	107	13	12.1
TOTAL SPECIAL ED.	87.5	1,274	48	3.8
SCHOOL LEVEL GRAND TOTAL	90.4	17,986	405	2.3

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 25 elementary and 10 middle schools. 407 data were missing for 5 elementary and 1 middle school.

[b] These data come from the 1990-91 school profiles

[c] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect form 407s filed at the sample schools during the 1990-91 academic year.

[d] Chancellor's Regulation A-210 requires that a Form 407 be issued when a student is absent without excuse for ten days. In addition, regulations state that 407s should be issued for known truants, no shows, transfers, non-returning suspensions, students without immunizations, and long-term absences (LTA's) after varying lengths of time.

TABLE III-11 (CONT'D)

1991-92 407 STUDY

407S FILED FOR C.S.D. SAMPLE[a]
BY SERVICE TYPE, TOTAL REGISTER
AND SCHOOL LEVEL

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

	TOTAL REGISTER[b]		407s[c]	
SERVICE TYPE	AVERAGE RATE OF ATTEN-DANCE	REGISTER	NUMBER FILED[d]	PERCENT OF REGISTER
General education	88.2	7,998	549	6.9
MIS I	82.6	653	107	16.3
MIS II	74.5	129	28	21.7
MIS III	80.8	12	3	25.0
MIS IV	-	-	-	-
MIS V	84.5	8	-	-
Other sp. ed service categories	72.7	78	13	16.7
TOTAL SPECIAL ED.	81.1	880	151	17.2
SCHOOL LEVEL GRAND TOTAL	86.5	8,878	700	7.9

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 25 elementary and 10 middle schools. 407 data were missing for 5 elementary and 1 middle school.

[b] These data come from the 1990-91 school profiles

[c] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect form 407s filed at the sample schools during the 1990-91 academic year.

[d] Chancellor's Regulation A-210 requires that a Form 407 be issued when a student is absent without excuse for ten days. In addition, regulations state that 407s should be issued for known truants, no shows, transfers, non-returning suspensions, students without immunizations, and long-term absences (LTA's) after varying lengths of time.

TABLE III-11 (CONT'D)

1991-92 407 STUDY

407S FILED FOR C.S.D. SAMPLE[a]
BY SERVICE TYPE

	TOTAL REGISTER[b]		407s[c]	
SERVICE TYPE	AVERAGE RATE OF ATTEN-DANCE	REGISTER	NUMBER FILED[d]	PERCENT OF REGISTER
General education	89.5	24,710	906	3.6
MIS I	85.7	1,269	123	9.6
MIS II	80.6	279	37	13.3
MIS III	85.2	62	4	6.5
MIS IV	84.1	242	5	2.1
MIS V	85.4	117	4	3.4
Other sp. ed service categories	78.8	185	26	14.0
TOTAL SPECIAL ED.	84.3	2,154	199	9.2
SCHOOL LEVEL GRAND TOTAL	88.5	26,864	1,105	4.1

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 25 elementary and 10 middle schools. 407 data were missing for 5 elementary and 1 middle school.

[b] These data come from the 1990-91 school profiles

[c] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect form 407s filed at the sample schools during the 1990-91 academic year.

[d] Chancellor's Regulation A-210 requires that a Form 407 be issued when a student is absent without excuse for ten days. In addition, regulations state that 407s should be issued for known truants, no shows, transfers, non-returning suspensions, students without immunizations, and long-term absences (LTA's) after varying lengths of time.

TABLE III-12

1991-92 407 STUDY
SAMPLE BY DISTRICT FOR
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS[a]

SERVICE TYPE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] AVERAGE RATE OF ATTENDANCE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] REGISTER	407s[c] NUMBER FILED	407s[c] PERCENT OF REGISTER
		DISTRICT B		
General education	88.2	1,985	60	3.0
MIS I	87.3	211	3	1.4
MIS II	86.7	24	2	8.3
MIS III	--	--	-	--
MIS IV	85.4	63	1	1.6
MIS V	--	--	-	--
Other sp. ed service categories	81.2	22	2	9.1
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	**85.8**	**320**	**8**	**2.5**
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	**87.9**	**2,305**	**68**	**3.0**
		DISTRICT C		
General education	92.6	2,529	105	4.2
MIS I	91.1	83	7	8.4
MIS II	92.6	40	1	2.5
MIS III	--	--	-	--
MIS IV	89.5	29	-	--
MIS V	85.1	38	3	7.9
Other sp. ed service categories	90.6	37	3	8.1
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	**91.9**	**227**	**14**	**6.2**
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	**92.0**	**2756**	**119**	**4.3**

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 25 elementary and 10 middle schools. 407 data were missing for 5 elementary and 1 middle school.

[b] These data come from the 1990-91 school profiles.

[c] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect 1990-91 Form 407s filed at each study school.

TABLE III-12 (Con't'd.)

1991-92 407 STUDY
SAMPLE BY DISTRICT FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS[a]

SERVICE TYPE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] AVERAGE RATE OF ATTENDANCE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] REGISTER	407s[c] NUMBER FILED	407s[c] PERCENT OF REGISTER
		DISTRICT D		
General education	89.4	4,557	90	2.0
MIS I	89.0	106	1	0.9
MIS II	85.1	27	2	7.4
MIS III	--	--	-	--
MIS IV	83.3	45	1	2.2
MIS V	--	--	-	--
Other sp. ed service categories	83.6	48	5	10.4
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	86.9	226	9	4.0
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	89.2	4,783	99	2.1
		DISTRICT E		
General education	91.4	3,675	63	1.7
MIS I	86.6	90	2	2.2
MIS II	85.0	37	1	2.7
MIS III	90.3	31	1	3.2
MIS IV	73.7	30	-	--
MIS V	87.2	37	1	2.7
Other sp. ed service categories	--	--	2	--
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	86.7	225	7	3.1
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	91.1	3,900	70	1.8

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 25 elementary and 10 middle schools. 407 data were missing for 5 elementary and 1 middle school.

[b] These data come from the 1990-91 school profiles.

[c] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect 1990-91 Form 407s filed at each study school.

TABLE III-12 (cont'd.)

1991-92407 STUDY
SAMPLE BY DISTRICT FOR
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS[a]

SERVICE TYPE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] AVERAGE RATE OF ATTENDANCE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] REGISTER	407s[c] NUMBER FILED	407s[c] PERCENT OF REGISTER
		DISTRICT F		
General education	93.0	3,996	39	0.9
MIS I	89.9	126	2	1.6
MIS II	90.0	27	1	3.7
MIS III	88.6	19	-	--
MIS IV	90.1	75	3	4.0
MIS V	86.2	34	-	--
Other sp. ed service categories	--	-	-	--
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	**89.2**	**281**	**6**	**2.1**
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	92.7	4,277	45	1.1

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 25 elementary and 10 middle schools. 407 data were missing for 5 elementary and 1 middle school.

[b] These data come from the 1990-91 school profiles.

[c] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect 1990-91 Form 407s filed at each study school.

TABLE III-13

407 STUDY SAMPLE BY DISTRICT FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS[a]

SERVICE TYPE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] AVERAGE RATE OF ATTENDANCE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] REGISTER	407's[c] NUMBER FILED	407's[c] PERCENT OF REGISTER
		DISTRICT B		
General education	85.6	1,174	219	18.7
MIS I	77.1	127	33	26.0
MIS II	70.9	20	2	10.0
MIS III	80.8	12	3	25.0
Other sp. ed service categories	71.4	39	12	30.8
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	**75.4**	**198**	**50**	**25.6**
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	**84.0**	**1,372**	**269**	**19.6**
		DISTRICT C		
General education	91.4	855	138	16.1
MIS I	83.9	89	38	42.7
MIS II	82.0	32	17	53.1
MIS III	--	0	-	-
Other sp. ed service categories	--	0	-	-
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	**83.4**	**121**	**55**	**45.5**
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	**90.4**	**976**	**193**	**19.8**

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 10 middle schools. 407 data was missing for 1 middle school.

[b] These data come from the 1990-91 school profiles.

[c] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect 1990-91 Form 407's filed at each study school.

TABLE III-13 (CONT.'D)

407 STUDY SAMPLE BY DISTRICT FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS[a]

SERVICE TYPE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] AVERAGE RATE OF ATTENDANCE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] REGISTER	407's[c] NUMBER FILED	407's[c] PERCENT OF REGISTER
DISTRICT D				
General education	87.6	1,493	99	6.6
MIS I	84.6	119	7	5.9
MIS II	79.1	26	-	-
MIS III	--	-	-	
Other sp. ed service categories	--	0	-	-
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	83.5	145	7	4.8
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	87.2	1,638	106	6.4
DISTRICT E				
General education	88.4	1,708	57	3.3
MIS I	82.7	129	10	7.8
MIS II	78.5	26	8	30.8
MIS III	--	0	-	-
Other sp. ed service categories	--	0	4	-
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	81.6	155	22	14.2
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	87.8	1,863	79	4.2

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 10 middle schools. 407 data was missing for 1 middle school.

[b] These data come from the 1990-91 school profiles.

[c] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect 1990-91 Form 407's filed at each study school.

TABLE III-13 (CONT'D.)

407 STUDY SAMPLE BY DISTRICT FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS[a]

SERVICE TYPE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] AVERAGE RATE OF ATTENDANCE	TOTAL REGISTER[b] REGISTER	407's[c] NUMBER FILED	407's[c] PERCENT OF REGISTER
		DISTRICT F		
General education	88.5	1,752	72	4.1
MIS I	82.5	134	19	14.2
MIS II	73.1	25	1	4.0
MIS III	--	-	-	-
Other sp. ed service categories	--	-	-	-
TOTAL SPECIAL ED. FOR DISTRICT	**81.8**	**159**	**20**	**12.5**
GRAND TOTAL FOR DISTRICT	**88.2**	**1,911**	**92**	**4.8**

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 10 middle schools. 407 data was missing for 1 middle school.

[b] These data come from the 1990-91 school profiles.

[c] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect 1990-91 Form 407's filed at each study school.

TABLE III-14

407s FILED FOR AIDP SCHOOLS[a]
BY SERVICE TYPE AND TOTAL REGISTER
AND SCHOOL LEVEL

SERVICE TYPE	TOTAL REGISTER: AVERAGE RATE OF ATTENDANCE	TOTAL REGISTER: REGISTER	407s: NUMBER FILED	407s: PERCENT OF REGISTER
		ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS		
General education	88.6	302	9	2.9
MIS I	86.8	1	1	100.0
MIS II	80.4	22	2	9.1
TOTAL SPECIAL ED.	81.2	23	3	13.4
SCHOOL LEVEL GRAND TOTAL	88.0	324	12	3.7
		MIDDLE SCHOOLS		
General education	86.2	3869	393	10.2
MIS I	79.3	379	54	14.2
MIS II	70.2	92	11	12.0
MIS III	80.8	12	3	25.0
Other sp. ed service categories	71.4	39	12	26.4
TOTAL SPECIAL ED.	75.4	522	80	15.3
SCHOOL LEVEL GRAND TOTAL	80.8	4,391	473	10.8

[a] There were a total of 6 AIDP schools in the study, one elementary school and 5 middle schools.

TABLE III-15
1991-92 407 Study

TOTAL ABSENCES SINCE SEPTEMBER 1990
BY TYPE OF STUDENT[a]

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT	GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENTS		SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS	
	N	%[b]	N	%[b]
Less than 5	1	0.8	0	---
5 - 15	16	13.6	23	11.7
16 - 25	37	28.0	60	30.5
26 - 40	39	29.5	62	31.5
41 - 55	17	12.9	25	13.0
56 - 70	13	9.8	15	7.8
71 - 85	1	0.8	9	4.6
86 - 100	1	0.8	0	---
101 - 115	3	2.2	1	0.5
116 - 130	2	1.5	0	---
More than 130	2	1.5	2	1.0
Total	132	100.0	197	100.0

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 25 elementary schools and 10 middle schools. These data were collected by OREA staff and reflect Form 407s filed at the 20 elementary and 9 middle schools for which we were able to obtain such data for the 1990-91 academic year.

[b] The actual total may be greater than 100.0% due to the effect of rounding.

TABLE III-16
1991-92 407 Study

TOTAL ABSENCES DURING THE MONTH THE 407 WAS ISSUED BY TYPE OF STUDENT[a]

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT	GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENTS		SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS	
	N	%	N	%
Less than 5	45	38.1	59	34.5
5 - 9	30	25.4	72	42.1
10 - 14	32	27.1	35	20.4
15 - 19	11	9.4	4	2.4
More than 19	-	---	1	0.6
Total	118	100.0	171	100.0

[a] There were 5 districts in the study and a total of 23 elementary schools and 9 middle schools. These data were collected by OREA staff and reflect Form 407s filed at the 20 elementary and 9 middle schools from which this data was available for the 1990-91 academic year. OREA researchers sampled every special education and every third general education 407 on file for that year.

TABLE III-17

1991-92 407 STUDY

SUMMARY OF SAMPLE DISCHARGES FOR SPECIAL AND GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENTS[a]

COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

DISCHARGE CATEGORY	GENERAL EDUCATION		SPECIAL EDUCATION		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
TRANSFERRED TO OTHER NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS UNIT	30	27.5	25	37.9	55	31.4
OBTAINED EMPLOYMENT CERTIFICATE	1	0.9	2	3.0	3	1.7
UNDER 6 YRS.	1	0.9	0	---	1	0.6
ADMITTED TO PAROCHIAL SCH.	9	8.3	0	---	9	5.1
ADMITTED TO PRIVATE SCH.	2	1.8	1	1.5	3	1.7
IN NON BD OF ED INSTITUTION	0	---	1	1.5	1	0.6
REMOVAL FROM N.Y.C	23	21.1	5	7.6	28	16.0
NOT FOUND	13	11.9	2	3.0	15	8.6
HOME INSTRUC. BD. OF ED.	3	27.5	1	1.5	4	2.3
OVER 17 DISCH.	2	1.8	0	---	2	1.1
SCHOOL IN OTHER CITY	0	---	1	1.5	1	0.6
MISSING DATA	25	22.9	28	42.4	53	30.3
TOTAL	**109**	**100.0**	**66**	**100.0**	**175**	**100.0**

[a] These data were collected by OREA field staff and reflect actual discharge data indicated on the Form 407s filed at the study schools during the 1990-91 academic year.

[b] This category includes those cases for which the type of student (whether spec. or gen. education) was not indicated on the form 407.

TABLE III-18

SAMPLE HIGH SCHOOLS[a]

School (Code)	% 10+ absence[b]	#10+ absence[c]	SE-# 10+ absence[d]	SE-% student body[e]
IX	9.7	297	123	4.1
IV	13.7	134	50	10.1
X	16.1	437	135	3.9
VII	23.7	441	188	7.0
VIII	26.4	783	197	4.6
V	30.4	309	164	15.5
VI	34.9	678	262	7.4
II	34.9	734	274	11.1
III	46.5	1,241	501	9.4
I	47.3	641	278	10.0

[a] All data in this table was supplied by U.A.P.C. (Data for the C.S.D. portion of the study was supplied by A.T.S.)

[b] This column represents the percent of students with ten or more consecutive absences, schoolwide, for the 1990-1991 school year.

[c] The number of students with 10 or more unexcused absences, schoolwide, for the 1990-1991 school year.

[d] The number of special education students with 10 or more unescused absences for the 1990-1991 schol year.

[e] The percent of special education students within the student population.

TABLE III-19

ATTENDANCE TEACHER INTERVIEW

HIGH SCHOOLS

Number of Days of Absence after which an Investigation is Initiated (For particular types of students)

Category	1-5		6-10		11-15		>15	
	#[a]	%[b]	#	%	#	%	#	%
Students with unexplained consecutive absences	6	60.0	4	40.0	0	--	0	--
Students with unexplained sporadic absences	3	37.5	4	50.0	0	--	1	12.5
Transfer students who do not arrive when expected	4	40.0	5	50.0	1	10.0	0	--
Suspended stud. who do not return after end of suspens.	3	37.5	4	50.0	1	12.5	0	--
Stud. who do not report to school in Sept. ("No Shows")	8	80.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	0	--
Spec. Ed. stud. who do not report to a new placement	5	62.5	3	37.5	0	--	0	--
Students who are known truants	4	57.1	3	42.9	0	--	0	--
Stud. with frequent cutting and/or lateness	5	71.4	2	28.6	0	--	0	--

Comparing attendance investigations of special education students with those of general education students, which are more successful in returning the student back to school?

	Frequency	Percent[c]
General education investigations	5	62.5
Special education investigations	1	12.5
Do not know	2	25.5
Total	8	100.0

[a] The number of respondents who begin investigations at the number of days indicated.

[b] This is a row percent; i.e., the percent of the ten respondents who begin investigations at the number of days indicated for a category of problem.

[c] This is a column percent.

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TABLE II-19 (CONT'D)

ATTENDANCE TEACHER INTERVIEW

HIGH SCHOOLS

Cooperation with attendance investigation (parents)

	Frequency[a]	Percent[b]
Spec. ed. parents are more cooperative	2	20.0
Spec. ed. parents are less cooperative	1	10.0
No differences	7	70.0
Total	10	100.0

Cooperation with attendance investigation (students)

	Frequency[a]	Percent[b]
Spec. ed. students are more cooperative	1	12.5
Spec. ed. students are less cooperative	3	37.5
No differences	4	50.0
Total	8	100.0

[a] The number of respondents who agree with a statement that parents of special education students, or the students themselves, are more or less cooperative than general education students with a 407 attendance investigation.

[b] This is a column percent.

TABLE III-20

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION
RESPONSES TO KEY ITEMS

HIGH SCHOOLS

Special Education Personnel on the School's Attendance Committee[a]

Response Category	Frequency	Percent[b]
AP for Special Education	5	50.0
Special Education Att. Coordinator	4	40.0
Special Education Teachers	3	30.0
Special Education Guidance Counselor	2	20.0
SBST member	1	10.0
Other	4	40.0

Attendance Problems that Come to the Assistant Principals Attention

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Students with unexplained consecutive or sporadic absences	9	90.0
Students who cut frequently	9	90.0
Students who are late frequently	8	80.0
Students who do not report to school in September	7	70.0
Transfer students who do not arrive when expected	6	60.0
Suspended students who do not return to school after end of suspension	3	30.0
Others	3	30.0

[a] In nine schools (90 percent of those surveyed) special education staff is represented in the schools attendance committee.

[b] These are row percents and reflect the percentage of total respondents sampled (N=10) represented in each category.

TABLE III-20 (Cont'd)

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

HIGH SCHOOLS

Staff that is involved in preliminary attendance investigations[a]

	Spec. ed. staff		Gen. ed. staff		Total	
Response Category	n	%	#	%	#	%[b]
A.P. for Spec. Education	5	50.0	0	--	5	50.0
Attendance Coordinator	3	30.0	5	50.0	8	80.0
Social Worker	1	10.0	2	20.0	3	30.0
Family Assistant	3	30.0	1	10.0	4	40.0
Attendance Teacher	2	20.0	0	--	2	20.0
C.I.T.	2	20.0	0	--	2	20.0
Guidance Counselor	5	50.0	0	--	5	50.0
Other	6	60.0	0	--	6	60.0

[a] Preliminary attendance investigations are investigations undertaken before a 407 is issued and typically consist of telephone calls, letters, interviews with peers. They may or may not include home visists. All the schools surveyed (n=10) engage in this kind of investigation.

[b] These are row percents based on the proportion of the ten sample schools represented in each response category.

TABLE III-21

ATTITUDINAL COMPARISON OF
A.P. SPECIAL ED, ATTENDANCE TEACHER
AND ATTENDANCE COORDINATOR

Opinion on whether it is better to gear attendance services to special education students or to integrate them into regular education services

	A. P.		Att. Teacher		Att. Coord.	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Integrate	2	25.0	4	44.4	5	62.5
Specialize	1	12.5	5	55.6	3	37.5
Combination[a]	5	62.5	0	--	0	--
Total	8	100.0	9	100.0	8	100.0

[a] Typically this refers to the suggestion to integrate services and beyond this to provide additional help for the particular needs of special education students.

TABLE III-22

TEACHER OBSERVATION OF MAJOR CAUSES OF ABSENCE
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Cause of Absence	Special Ed.		General Ed.		Mixed	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Unhappy with transfer	19	11.9	11	12.1	8	11.4
Suspension	18	11.3	11	12.1	8	11.4
Care for own children	18	11.3	9	9.9	7	10.0
Travel	18	11.3	8	8.8	7	10.0
Employment	18	11.3	10	9.1	6	8.6
Criminal activity	17	10.7	11	12.1	8	11.4
Help parents	15	9.4	9	9.9	2	2.9
Illness	15	9.4	3	3.3	6	8.6
Fear of school	15	9.4	11	12.1	8	11.4
Truancy	12	7.5	5	5.5	6	8.6
No longer interested in school	6	3.8	3	3.3	4	5.7
TOTAL	159	100.0	91	100.0	70	100.0

Table III-23

HIGH SCHOOLS

INITIATION OF 407 INVESTIGATIONS[a]

Total Days of Absence Since September 1990

	Special Education		General Education	
	n	%	n	%
Less than 20	53	31.5	168	38.4
20-39	47	28.0	124	28.3
40-59	34	20.2	54	12.3
60-79	18	10.7	36	8.2
80-99	8	4.8	17	3.9
100-120	1	0.6	7	1.6
More than 120	7	4.2	32	7.3
Total	168	100.0	438	100.0

Total Days Absent the Month the 407 was Issued

	Special Education		General Education	
	n	%	n	%
Less than 5	15	13.0	115	28.5
5-9	55	47.8	158	39.2
10-14	29	25.2	66	16.4
15-19	9	7.8	31	7.7
More than 20	7	6.1	33	8.2
Total	115	100.0	403	100.0

[a] The following data was obtained from a sample of every third special education, and every ninth regular education Form 407 at the ten study schools.

TABLE III-24

HIGH SCHOOL

407 ABSENCE CLASSIFICATIONS[a]

	Special Education		General Education	
	n	%	n	%
		(Lawful Reasons)		
Illness	11	10.0	23	6.0
Death in Family	0	--	3	0.8
Illness in Family	0	--	2	0.5
Incidental Problems	0	--	7	1.8
Other	2	1.8	5	1.3
		(Unlawful Reasons)		
Truancy	48	43.6	179	46.6
Unlawfully detained	0	--	3	0.8
Unlawfully employed	1	0.9	0	--
Other	13	11.8	15	3.9
		(Other Reasons)[b]		
Pupil Accounting	32	29.1	132	34.4
Unspecified	3	2.7	15	3.9
	110	100.0	384	100.0

Disposition

	Special Education		General Education	
	n	%	n	%
Student returned to school	70	44.3	208	45.3
Student was discharged	87	55.1	246	53.6
Other	1	0.6	5	1.1
Total	158	100.0	495	100.0

[a] The following data was obtained from a sample of every third special education, and every ninth regular education Form 407 at the ten study schools.

[b] Occasionally cases are classified other than absence. This may be the result of certain types of requests (e.g. a request for an address check) or an error in reporting. The student may be in school or discharged.

TABLE III-25

HIGH SCHOOLS

TYPES OF DISCHARGE LISTED ON 407s

	Special Education		General Education	
	n	%	n	%
Received Day High School Diploma (not a Certif. or H.S. IEP Diploma)	1	1.2	6	2.3
Admitted to other NYC Public School	5	5.8	21	8.1
Admitted to Parochial School	0	--	6	2.3
Admitted to Business/Trade School	0	--	1	0.4
Admitted to private School	0	--	3	1.2
In Institution (Non Bd. of Ed.)	8	9.3	3	1.2
Removal from New York City	9	10.5	70	26.9
Home Instruction (Bd. of Ed.)	1	1.2	0	--
Received H.S. IEP Diploma	1	1.2	0	--
Other	1	1.2	6	2.3
Subtotal	26	30.3	116	44.6
		(Over 17 Discharge)		
Received New York State High School Equivalency Diploma	2	2.3	0	--
Enrolled in Auxiliary Service for the High Schools	6	7.0	14	5.4
Enrolled in an Outreach Center	1	1.2	6	2.3
Enrolled in a NYC Public Evening H.S. to obtain H.S. Diploma	0	--	4	1.5
Enrolled in Vocational Training Prog. (e.g. Jobs Corps, OVR, etc)	0	--	3	1.2
Entered Military Service	2	2.3	0	--
Enrolled in full-time H.S. Equival. prog. other than in Auxiliary Serv.	2	2.3	14	5.4
Other "Over 17", not included in any categories above	39	45.3	67	25.8
Subtotal	52	60.4	108	41.6
		(Inter-High School Transfers)[a]		
Travel Hardship	1	1.2	2	0.8
No longer interested in program	1	1.2	3	1.2
Documented Safety	0	--	1	0.4
Moved (within New York City)	0	--	4	1.5
Other inter-high school transfer, not incl. in any categories above	6	7.0	26	10.0
Subtotal	8	9.4	36	13.9
Total	86	100.0	260	100.0

[a] Used in conjunction with the Application for Inter-High School Transfer (Form VI-A)

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This study clearly found that special education students have poorer rates of attendance than do general education students. This is true both in New York City public schools, and for the other school districts which were able to provide such data. In comparison to other systems, New York City is leading in its concern with attendance issues, but possibly due to the size and diversity of the system, has difficulty in carrying out its own mandates effectively for both populations. In addition, New York City is now functioning within a climate of serious fiscal constraint which has affected its ability to provide staff to deliver services, including attendance investigations.

Key Findings

The largest portion of this study examined the manner and degree to which the New York City public school system provides attendance services to both special education students and general education students. OREA found that: informal absence follow-up is better for special education students than for general education students, the rate of 407 referral is generally greater for special education than for general education students, but formal 407 investigation procedures and follow-up seem to be equally lacking in both populations. Despite some contradictions within each school level--with the most serious discrepancies at the middle school level--OREA's analysis of both statistical and qualitative data revealed the following:

- There was no meaningful difference in the frequency of follow-up services for general and for special

education students.

- In a majority of the study schools, there was an inverse relationship between average attendance rates for special education students and the number of 407s filed. At times, this inverse relationship, showing additional attention to special education youngsters, was quite marked.

- Districts and schools showed a wide range of variability in services, resources, and types of staff devoted to attendance improvement. The most consistency was found in the high schools, due to the fact that the attendance teacher is school and not district-based.

- Students in the state-funded Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Program had more resources and services for attendance than non-program schools.

- Special education teachers tended to be more actively involved in attendance improvement efforts for their students than general education teachers.

Areas of Concern

Inadequate attendance service affects all students, especially on the community school district level. In fact, special education students clearly receive more attention through their classrooms and special education support personnel than do general education students. Perhaps, then, special education students' poorer attendance rates are due to a variety of educational, social, economic, and health reasons, rather than to a difference in intervention. Areas of concern include:

- Interviewees talked about a general decrease in motivation among special education students with age. Therefore, the linkage between appropriate instruction and school attendance should be explored.

- Attitudes toward special education students were variable both across and within schools. Certainly, school climate is an important issue for all students; those struggling with stigmatization would be even more

sensitive to this factor.

- A disproportionate number of students may be placed in special education who have a history of poor attendance, thereby negatively skewing attendance rates for the special education population.

- Health services for the younger and more disabled students may not be optimal, along with a lack of age-appropriate care for adolescents.

Suggestions by School Staff

Interviewees, virtually without exception, stated that services for special education and general education students should be integrated. However, with probing, it was revealed that some interviewees felt that a backlash has occurred due to greater funding for special education, which may be detrimental to this population. Others seemed to advocate integration simply because they believe that this is what is required. A few showed an awareness that extra services can be targeted where needed -- whether special education, or another population such as students in temporary housing. However, concerns over funding and staffing were also expressed by this group. High school interviewees were more likely to advocate integration of services plus programs targeted to the special education student, than were C.S.D. level respondents.

High school interviewees, when asked for suggestions and recommendations, advocated for an increase in occupationally relevant courses for all students. It was felt that an interesting, relevant curriculum would do much to keep both general and special education students in school. In addition, interviewees across districts and levels discussed the need for

better attendance staffing. As pointed out earlier, high school attendance supervisors felt that their staff was now responsible for interventions which should have been carried out sooner. In fact, the high school interviewees agree with C.S.D. respondents that dropout prevention services must begin at a very early age -- with parents in kindergarten, and then with the youngsters themselves as they transition from elementary school to middle school and middle to high school.

Recommendations

In sum, OREA has found that special education students receive as good, or slightly better, attendance intervention than do general education students. However, this still leaves a great deal of room for improvement for both populations. Based on the data presented, we would recommend the following:

- Every effort should be made during these times of fiscal constraint to increase attendance staffing on the community school district level. Attendance teachers could be assigned to schools in a similar manner as the special education site supervisors who are assigned to a specific number of schools within the district, and spend time based in each school.

- Work with the bus companies to address problems of routing and paperwork which can lead to delays in student transportation, thereby causing unnecessary loss of school time.

- Educate school and district staff as to the appropriateness of targeting resources to populations with special needs, even while integrating them into the life of the school.

- Encourage more rational record-keeping to decrease duplication of paperwork, while making the Form 407 more useable. At the same time, it should be understood that this is only one aspect of the attendance investigation process.

- Increase staff development on the school and district levels, in which attendance issues are integrated with other matters in order to hold the audience's interest.

- Develop parent involvement programs where stronger parents can act as leaders and role models for those who are having difficulty meeting their responsibilities in seeing to it that their youngsters are attending school.

- Continue to develop innovative models of instruction which will hold students until they complete their education.

- District leadership should provide assistance with formal attendance plans and setting up attendance committees (whether alone, or as a part of the Pupil Personnel Committee). In addition, the steps which high schools are taking in developing supplemental attendance plans and committees within special education should be encouraged, and possibly replicated at the community school district level.

- Social support and age-appropriate health care and guidance services, especially for more disabled students, and adolescents are needed. Linkages with neighborhood health centers, and day care services for parenting students, should be pursued.

Recently, it was hypothesized that improvements in the dropout rates of New York City high schools may be partially due to attendance initiatives.* These improvements are in keeping with OREA's finding that New York City compares favorably with other school systems in its attendance procedures. However, continued improvement will depend upon a combination of attendance, guidance, and instructional initiatives which cannot be divorced from each other. This is in keeping with such initiatives as the present reorganization of student support services within a single division.

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* Berger, Joseph. "Dropout rate down sharply for New York schools", p. A1, B2. The New York Times. 5/20/92.

APPENDIX

V- 1

Appendix A

NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

JOSEPH A. FERNANDEZ
CHANCELLOR

MEMORANDUM

June 30, 1993

TO: ROBERT TOBIAS

FROM: Francine B. Goldstein

SUBJECT: Bureau of Attendance Interventions re: OREA Report

The findings of the OREA Report reflect the fact that many community school districts are seriously understaffed in regard to the implementation and maintenance of effective attendance services and programs. The Bureau of Attendance provides on-going support to districts in order to improve attendance and to enhance services provided to students.

Training sessions are conducted on a city-wide, borough-wide, district and school level. The information presented at these sessions is specifically formulated to meet the needs of attendance personnel, focusing on the background, procedure and implementation of issues pertinent to the improvement of attendance services. Attendance staff are kept informed and updated on all new legislation and practices. Examples of topics of recent staff development sessions are as follows:

> Special Education, Attendance Regulations, Child Welfare Administration Procedures, PINS Diversion Program, Educational Neglect, Roll Book Recording, Attendance Procedures, High School Programs, Home Instruction, Working Paper Distribution and Family Court Procedures.

Another major thrust of the central Bureau of Attendance has been upon publicizing the importance of regular school attendance and recognizing the achievement of excellence in this area. An Attendance Awards Ceremony is conducted annually at City Hall and at each borough hall to honor students throughout the city who have achieved perfect or outstanding attendance. This year's ceremony included Mayor Dinkins, football superstar Lawrence Taylor, Peter Vallone, the president and vice president of the Board of Education and many other dignitaries. The purpose of this event is to draw attention to school attendance and to encourage students to excel. Districts throughout the city are supported in all efforts to recognize and reward good and/or improved attendance. Incentives such as tickets to baseball games, the circus and theater are provided to assist districts in the recognition of their students.

Another important element in the implementation of enhanced attendance services is the facilitation of communication among staff. Each year a revised directory listing all attendance and support personnel is distributed to enhance greater inter and intra-agency communication.

In summary, the OREA Report underscores the need for increased staffing in the area of attendance. However, since attendance programs are decentralized, the allocation of staff is a district decision. The Bureau of Attendance makes recommendations and works closely with districts to allow for the coordination services and improvement of services.

FBG:jmc

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Appendix B

List of Respondents

State Survey

Arkansas
California
Colorado
Connecticut
Georgia
Illinois
Indiana
Iowa
Maine
Massachusetts
Michigan
Mississippi
Virginia
West Virginia
Wisconsin

City/District Survey

Atlanta, GA
Austin, TX
Baton Rouge, LA
Boston, MA
Buffalo, NY
Chicago, IL
Cincinnati, OH
Cleveland, OH
Colorado Springs, CO
Concord, CA
Dayton, OH
Detroit, MI
Falls Church, VA
Golden, CO
Greenville, SC
Hartford, CT
Houston, TX
Jacksonville, FL
Long Beach, CA
Mesa, AZ
Miami, FL
Mobile, AL
Nashville, TN
New York, NY
Norfolk, VA
Oakland, CA
Omaha, NE
Portland, OR
Raleigh, NC
Rochester, NY
San Diego, CA
Tucson, AZ
Wichita, KS
Winston Salem, NC

Appendix C

New York City Public Schools

NATIONAL SURVEY FOR STUDY OF ABSENTEEISM
AMONG SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

State _____ [State Level Survey]
Contact Person _____

1. How does your office define a student as being in need of attendance follow-up (e.g., # of days of unexplained absence, total # of days absent per semester)?

2. What procedures does the State Education Office recommend for the follow-up of chronically absent students?

3. To what degree is the decision regarding how and when to institute attendance follow-up left to individual districts?

4. About what proportion of the districts in your state use an automated system to track attendance?

   o In those districts which utilize an automated system for tracking attendance, have there been any changes in the follow-up of chronically absent students?

   If yes, please describe these changes.

5. a. Are there differences in attendance procedures for special education students vs. regular education students?

   If yes, please describe the differences.

NYC Public Schools
Survey of Special Education Attendance

b. Do these differences in attendance procedures lead to any differences in **attendance services** offered to special education as opposed to regular education students?

If yes, please describe the differences.

6. What trends has your office noted with regard to **absence rates** among special education as compared to regular education students?

a. Are these overall trends?

b. Do these trends differ:

- o by grade level?
- o by handicapping condition?
- o by district
- o by school?

Appendix C (cont'd)

New York City Public Schools

NATIONAL SURVEY FOR STUDY OF ABSENTEEISM
AMONG SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

City/District_____ [City/District Level
Contact Person _____ Survey]

1. In what manner does your district track attendance (e.g., do you use an automated system)?

2. After how many days of absence per semester is attendance follow-up initiated for the student?

3. Who is charged with the follow-up of students with multiple or chronic absences?

   o Title?

   o Is this person class, school or district-based?

4. What **procedures** are used for the follow-up of these students?

5. What **services**, if any, are offered to these students?

6. Are there differences in procedures and services for:

   a. Special education students vs. regular education students?

      o in elementary school?
      o in middle school?
      o in high school?

      Please describe the differences.

NYC Public Schools
Survey of Special Education Attendance

b. Special education students--

- o in resource room?
- o in self-contained classes?
- o in special schools (public)?

Please describe the differences.

7. What trends has your office noted with regard to absence rates among special education as compared to regular education students?

a. Are these overall trends?

b. Do these trends differ:

- o by grade level?
- o by handicapping condition?
- o by school?

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

APPENDIX D

Survey of Attendance Procedures
State Education Office Responses

1. After how many days of absence per semester is a student defined as in need of attendance follow-up.

	n	%
As per local policy	5	33.3
After 1-2 days	1	6.7
After 3-4 days	1	6.7
After 5-6 days	2	13.3
After 7 or more days	0	--
No response	6	40.0

2. Procedures recommended by the State Education Office for the follow-up of chronically absent students (multiple answers).

	n	%
Local policy	2	13.3
Telephone call	2	13.3
Mail	3	20.0
Home Visit	2	13.3
Student/parents conference	4	26.7
Referral to attendance investigator	1	6.7
Referral to law enforcement	1	6.7
Other	0	--
No response	9	60.0

Survey of Attendance Procedures
State Education Office Responses

3. Degree to which the decision regarding how and when to institute attendance follow-up is left to the individual districts or schools.

	n	%
Completely	6	40.0
Limited	2	13.3
No response	7	46.7

4a. Proportion of the districts in the state that use automated systems to track attendance.

	n	%
Less than 20 percent	1	6.7
20-40 percent	2	13.3
40-60 percent	0	--
60-80 percent	1	6.7
80-100 percent	1	6.7
Not studied	4	26.7
No response	6	40.0

4b. Changes in the attendance follow-up that occurred in those districts introducing automated systems.

	n	%
Faster/more frequent stud/parent conferences	2	13.3
No changes	1	6.7
Not studied	2	13.3
No response	10	66.7

Survey of Attendance Procedures
State Education Office Responses

5. Differences in attendance procedures for special education students vs. general education students.

	n	%
No differences	6	40.0
Faster procedures	1	6.7
Not studied	5	33.3
No response	3	20.0

6. Differences in absence rates between special education students and general education students.

	n	%
No differences	1	6.7
Higher for special education students	1	6.7
Higher for general education students	0	--
Not studied	10	66.7
No response	3	20.0

APPENDIX E

ATTENDANCE RATES AS COMPARED WITH FORM 407s GENERATED IN 1990-1991 COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES[a]		407 EXPERIENCE[b]		
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School B1					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	302	88.6	GE	9	2.9
MIS-I	N/A[c]	86.6	MIS I	0	-
MIS-IV	N/A	88.6	MIS IV	1	-
OTHER SP. ED.	22	80.4	OTHER SP. ED.	2	9.1
SP. ED. TOTAL	22	81.2	SP. ED. TOTAL	3	13.6
TOTAL	324	88.0	TOTALS	12	3.7
School B2					
GEN. ED.TOTAL	353	88.5	GE	9	2.5
MIS-I	82	85.4	MIS I	2	2.4
MIS-IV	18	83.1	MIS IV	1	5.6
SP. ED. TOTAL	100	85.0	SP. ED. TOTAL	3	3.0
TOTAL	453	87.7	TOTAL	12	2.6
School B3					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	448	83.9	GE	15	3.3
MIS-I	64	86.1	MIS I	-	-
MIS-IV	45	84.5	MIS IV	-	-
SP. ED. TOTAL	109	85.4	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	-
TOTAL	557	84.2	TOTAL	15	2.7

[a] The information on the left hand column is taken directly from the 1990-1991 school profile.

[b] The information on the right hand column is taken from OREA's review of Form 407s in the schools and districts.

[c] The register was entered as "0" on the school profile.

APPENDIX E (Cont'd)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES			407 EXPERIENCE	
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School B4					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	419	89.5	GE	12	2.9
MIS-I	45	87.9	MIS I	0	---
MIS-II	24	86.7	MIS II	1	4.2
SP. ED. TOTAL	69	87.5	SP. ED. TOTAL	1	1.4
TOTAL	488	89.2	TOTAL	14	2.9
School B5					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	463	90.6	GE	15	3.2
MIS-I	20	90.1	MIS I	-	-
MIS-II	0	---	MIS II[a]	1	-
SP. ED. TOTAL	20	90.1	SP. ED. TOTAL	1	5.0
TOTAL	483	90.5	TOTAL	16	3.3
School C1					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	924	91.7	GE	87	9.4
MIS-I	31	89.2	MIS I	2	6.5
MIS-VI	29	89.5	MIS IV	-	-
OTHER SP. ED	0	---	OTHER SP. ED.	2	-
SP. ED. TOTAL	60	89.3	SP. ED. TOTAL	4	6.7
TOTAL	984	91.5	TOTAL	91	9.2

[a] OREA found occasional discrepancies between the program service categories listed on the register and the classification of an individual student. Although this may be attributed to clerical error, the discrepancy may also reflect placement practice.

APPENDIX E (Cont'd)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES			407 EXPERIENCE	
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School C2					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	1,434	92.6	GE	Not found	
MIS-I	34	92.9	MIS I	Not found	
MIS-II	25	86.4	MIS II	Not found	
SP. ED. TOTAL	59	90.0	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	1,493	92.5	TOTAL	-	---
School C3					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	658	91.9	GE	3	0.5
MIS-I	33	90.7	MIS I	5	15.2
MIS-II	40	92.6	MIS II	1	2.5
OTHER SP. ED.	37	90.6	OTHER SP. ED.	1	2.7
SP. ED. TOTAL	110	91.3	SP. ED. TOTAL	7	6.4
TOTAL	768	91.8	TOTAL	10	1.3
School C4					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	947	92.8	GE	15	1.6
MIS-I	19	93.5	MIS I	0	---
MIS V	38	85.1	MIS V	3	7.9
SP. ED. TOTAL	57	88.0	SP. ED. TOTAL	3	5.3
TOTAL	1,004	92.5	TOTAL	18	1.8
School C5					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	914	94.1	GE	Not found	
MIS-I	25	92.3	MIS I	Not found	
MIS-IV	51	88.9	MIS IV	Not found	
SP. ED. TOTAL	76	90.1	SP.ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	990	93.8	TOTAL	-	---

APPENDIX E (Cont'd)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES			407 EXPERIENCE	
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School D1					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	1,087	90.0	GE	36	3.3
MIS-I	10	91.2	MIS I	-	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	10	91.2	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	1,097	90.0	TOTAL	36	3.3
School D2					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	813	85.7	GE	15	1.9
MIS-IV	19	87.7	MIS IV	-	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	19	87.7	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	832	85.8	TOTAL	15	1.9
School D3					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	500	88.7	GE	15	3.0
MIS-I	52	89.5	MIS I	1	2.0
MIS-IV	18	88.3	MIS IV	1	5.6
OTHER SP. ED.	48	83.6	OTHER SP. ED.	2	4.2
SP. ED. TOTAL	118	86.9	SP. ED. TOTAL	4	3.4
TOTAL	618	88.3	TOTAL	19	3.1
School D4					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	903	90.6	GE	21	2.3
MIS-II	27	85.1	MIS II	2	7.4
MIS-IV	8	73.8	MIS IV	-	---
OTHER SP. ED.	0	---	OTHER SP. ED.	2[a]	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	35	82.5	SE TOTAL	4	11.4
TOTAL	938	90.3	TOTAL	25	26.7

[a] At times, it was not possible to determine the students' program service category from the information given.

APPENDIX E (Cont'd)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES			407 EXPERIENCE	
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School D5					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	1,254	91.9	GE	3	0.2
MIS-I	44	86.2	MIS I	0	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	44	86.2	SP. ED. TOTAL	1	2.3
TOTAL	1,298	91.7	TOTAL	4	0.3
School E1					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	461	93.3	GE	6	1.3
MIS-II	8	80.3	MIS II	-	---
MIS-V	37	87.2	MIS V	1	---
OTHER SP. ED.	0	---	OTHER SP. ED[a]	2	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	45	85.9	SP. ED. TOTAL	3	6.7
TOTAL	506	92.6	TOTAL	9	1.8
School E2					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	482	87.5	GE	15	3.1
MIS-I	36	85.7	MIS I	-	---
MIS-IV	N/A[b]	62.3	MIS IV	-	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	36	84.5	SP. ED. TOTAL	1	2.8
TOTAL	518	87.2	TOTAL	16	3.1
School E3					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	1,169	92.2	GE	15	1.2
MIS-III	31	90.3	MIS III	1	3.2
MIS-IV	20	86.9	MIS IV	-	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	51	89.1	SP. ED. TOTAL	1	2.0
TOTAL	1,220	92.1	TOTAL	16	1.3

[a] At times, it was not possible to determine the students' program service category from the information given.

[b] The register was entered as "0" on the school profile.

APPENDIX E (Cont'd)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES			407 EXPERIENCE	
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School E4					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	607	91.0	GE	10	0.9
MIS-I	43	86.6	MIS I	2	4.7
MIS-II	24	85.3	MIS II	1	4.2
SP. ED. TOTAL	67	86.1	SP. ED. TOTAL	3	4.5
TOTAL	674	90.6	TOTAL	9	1.3
School E5					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	956	93.1	GE	21	2.2
MIS-I	11	90.5	MIS I	-	---
MIS-IV	10	85.0	MIS IV	-	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	21	88.0	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	977	93.0	TOTAL	21	2.1
School F1					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	690	90.1	GE	36	5.2
MIS-IV	45	88.3	MIS IV	3	6.67
SP. ED. TOTAL	45	88.3	SP. ED. TOTAL	3	6.67
TOTAL	735	90.0	TOTAL	39	5.3
School F2					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	678	93.9	GE	Not found	
MIS-I	31	89.4	MIS I	Not found	
MIS-V	34	86.2	MIS V	Not found	
SP. ED. TOTAL	65	87.7	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	743	93.3	TOTAL	-	---

APPENDIX E (Cont'd)

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES			407 EXPERIENCE	
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School F3					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	924	93.4	GE	0	---
MIS-I	47	91.6	MIS I	0	---
MIS-IV	30	91.8	MIS IV	0	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	77	91.7	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	1,001	93.3	TOTAL	-	---
School F4					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	470	93.2	GE	Not found	
MIS-I	20	90.4	MIS I	Not found	
MIS-III	19	88.6	MIS III	Not found	
SP. ED. TOTAL	39	89.5	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	509	92.9	TOTAL	-	---
School F5					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	1,204	94.3	GE	3	0.3
MIS-I	28	88.0	MIS I	2	7.1
MIS-II	27	90.0	MIS II	1	3.7
SP. ED. TOTAL	55	88.9	SP. ED. TOTAL	3	5.5
TOTAL	1,259	94.0	TOTAL	6	0.5

APPENDIX E (Cont'd)

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES			407 EXPERIENCE	
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School B11					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	711	82.0	GE	138	19.4
MID. MIS-I	72	74.9	MID. MIS I	20	27.8
MID. MIS-II	20	70.9	MID. MIS II	2	10.0
SP. ED. TOTAL	92	74.1	SP. ED. TOTAL	22	23.9
TOTAL	803	81.1	TOTAL	109	19.2
School B12					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	463	89.1	GE	81	17.5
MID. MIS-I	55	79.2	MID. MIS I	13	23.6
MID. MIS-III	12	80.8	MID. MIS III	3	25.0
OTHER SP. ED.	39	71.4	OTHER SP. ED.	12	30.8
SP. ED. TOTAL	106	76.7	SP. ED.TOTAL	28	26.4
TOTAL	569	86.9	TOTAL	109	19.2
School C11					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	1,016	89.8	GE	Not found	
MID. MIS-I	55	87.0	MID. MIS I	Not found	
MID. MIS-V	8	84.5	MID. MIS V	Not found	
OTHER SP. ED.	39	74.0	OTHER SP. ED.	Not found	
SP. ED. TOTAL	102	82.2	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	1,118	89.1	TOTAL	-	---
School C12					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	855	91.4	GE	138	16.1
MID. MIS-I	89	83.9	MID. MIS I	38	42.7
MID. MIS-II	32	82.0	MID. MIS II	17	53.1
SP. ED. TOTAL	121	83.4	SP. ED.TOTAL	55	45.5
TOTAL	976	90.4	TOTAL	193	19.8

APPENDIX E (Cont'd)

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES			407 EXPERIENCE	
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School D11					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	1,128	85.0	GE	90	7.9
MID. MIS-I	96	79.8	MID. MIS I	7	7.3
MID. MIS II	26	69.1	MID. MIS II	0	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	122	77.6	SP. ED. TOTAL	7	5.7
TOTAL	1,250	84.3	TOTAL	97	7.8
School D12					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	365	90.2	GE	9	2.5
MID. MIS-I	23	89.4	MID. MIS I	0	---
SP. ED. TOTAL	23	89.4	SP. ED. TOTAL	-	---
TOTAL	388	90.1	TOTAL	9	2.3
School E11					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	858	89.1	GE	7	0.8
MID. MIS-I	45	84.6	MIS I	N/A	N/A
MID. MIS II	5	89.5	MIS II	N/A	N/A
SP. ED. TOTAL	50	85.2	SP. ED. TOTAL	1[a]	2.0
TOTAL	908	88.9	TOTAL	8	0.9
School E12					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	850	87.7	GE	12	1.4
MID. MIS-I	84	80.8	MID. MIS I	N/A	N/A
MID. MIS-II	21	67.5	MID. MIS II	N/A	N/A
SP. ED. TOTAL	105	78.3	SP. ED. TOTAL	21	20.0
TOTAL	955	86.7	TOTAL	33	3.5

[a] The program service category could not be determined from the available information.

APPENDIX E (Cont'd)

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

	ATTENDANCE RATES			407 EXPERIENCE	
	REGISTER	RATE		# OF 407S	% OF REGISTER
School F11					
GEN.ED. TOTAL	717	87.0	GE	16	2.2
MIS-I	72	82.0	MIS I	N/A	N/A
MIS-II	25	73.1	MIS II	N/A	N/A
SP. ED. TOTAL	97	79.7	SP. ED. TOTAL	5	5.2
TOTAL	814	86.1	TOTAL	21	2.6
School F12					
GEN. ED. TOTAL	1,035	90.5	GE	8	0.7
MIS-I	62	83.9	MIS I	15	24.2
SP. ED. TOTAL	62	83.9	SP. ED. TOTAL	15	24.9
TOTAL	1,097	90.2	TOTAL	23	2.1

APPENDIX F

ATTENDANCE RATES[a] AS COMPARED WITH
1990-91 FORM 407s[b]

High Schools

H.S. I

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	1,107	90.4	48	4.3
Special Education	117	9.6	9	7.7
All Students	1,224	100.0	57	4.6

	Attendance Rate Incl. LTA	Attendance Rate Excl. LTA	# 407s issued	% 407s of register
General Education	73.6	77.2	594	53.6
Special Education	66.6	73.1	27	23.0
All Students	73.0	76.6	621	50.7

H.S. II

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	1,807	89.1	93	5.1
Special Education	223	10.9	17	7.6
All Students	2,030	100.0	110	5.4

	Attendance Rate Incl. LTA	Attendance Rate Excl. LTA	# 407s issued	% 407s of register
General Education	83.9	85.7	342	18.9
Special Education	67.8	74.0	90	40.3
All Students	N/A	N/A	432	21.3

[a] Sources for attendance registers, attendance rates, and LTAs: 1990-91 school profiles, and 1990-91 Monthly Attendance Rates, cumulative for the school year as of July, 1991.

[b] 407 data was obtained by OREA researchers who sampled every third special education and every ninth general education 407 at the study schools. The #s of 407s reflect the number of 407s obtained for the sample, multiplied by the appropriate factor. Percentages were then calculated for each category (407s divided by general, special and total register). The reader is also cautioned that the data reflect 407s issued, and not numbers of students followed. A student may have multiple 407s.

APPENDIX F (Cont'd)

H.S. III

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	2,229	90.9	145	6.5
Special Education	223	9.1	26	11.7
All Students	2,452	100.0	171	7.0

	Attendance Rate		# 407s	% 407s
	Incl. LTA	Excl. LTA	issued	of register
General Education	72.7	78.3	432	19.4
Special Education	59.4	68.0	36	16.1
All Students	71.8	76.9	468	19.1

H.S. IV

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	866	90.1	15	1.7
Special Education	95	9.9	2	2.1
All Students	961	100.0	17	1.8

	Attendance Rate		# 407s	% 407s
	Incl. LTA	Excl. LTA	issued	of register
General Education	88.0	89.4	378	43.6
Special Education	87.6	89.3	21	22.1
All Students	87.9	89.4	399	41.5

H.S. V

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	791	84.6	44	5.6
Special Education	144	15.4	8	5.6
All Students	935	100.0	52	5.6

	Attendance Rate		# 407s	% 407s
	Incl. LTA	Excl. LTA	issued	of register
General Education	82.8	87.7	180	22.7
Special Education	72.6	76.9	48	33.3
All Students	81.2	85.6	228	24.3

APPENDIX F (Cont'd)

H.S. VI

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	1,706	92.8	101	5.9
Special Education	132	7.2	14	10.6
All Students	1,838	100.0	115	6.3

	Attendance Rate		# 407s	% 407s
	Incl. LTA	Excl. LTA	issued	of register
General Education	80.4	85.9	729	42.7
Special Education	70.7	79.4	177	134.1
All Students	80.1	85.2	906	49.3

H.S. VII

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	1,691	93.2	53	3.1
Special Education	123	6.8	10	8.1
All Students	1,814	100.0	63	3.5

	Attendance Rate		# 407s	% 407s
	Incl. LTA	Excl. LTA	issued	of register
General Education	83.6	86.5	414	24.5
Special Education	66.9	72.7	33	26.8
All Students	82.9	85.7	447	24.6

H.S. VIII

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	2,701	95.5	123	4.6
Special Education	126	4.5	7	5.6
All Students	2,827	100.0	130	4.6

	% Attendance		# 407s	% 407s
	Incl. LTA	Excl. LTA	issued	of register
General Education	79.8	83.9	621	23.0
Special Education	76.1	81.0	36	28.6
All Students	79.7	83.5	657	23.2

APPENDIX F (Cont'd)

H.S. IX

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	2,792	96.0	46	1.6
Special Education	117	4.0	6	5.1
All Students	2,909	100.0	52	1.8

	% Attendance		# 407s	% 407s
	Incl. LTA	Excl. LTA	issued	of register
General Education	89.7	91.3	351	12.6
Special Education	82.1	86.5	36	30.7
All Students	89.6	91.2	387	13.3

H.S. X

	# Reg	% Reg	# LTA	% LTA
General Education	2,576	96.3	30	1.2
Special Education	99	3.7	4	4.0
All Students	2,675	100.0	34	1.3

	Attendance Rate		# 407s	% 407s
	Incl. LTA	Excl. LTA	issued	of register
General Education	87.2	88.3	576	22.4
Special Education	81.9	84.7	45	45.5
All Students	87.1	88.2	621	23.2

APPENDIX G

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CASE STUDY

Study school: D-3

Comparison of General Education and Special Education Attendance and 407 Experience

Total #-GE Students	Attendance Rate	Total #-407s	% 407s
500	88.7	15	3.0
Total #-SE Students	**Attendance Rate**	**Total #-407s**	**% 407s**
118	86.9	4	3.4
MIS I 52	89.5	1	2.0
MIS IV 18	88.3	1	5.6
Other SE 48	83.6	2	4.2

Total Register: 618 **Total 407s:** 19

SE Students as % of GE Students: 23.6 **SE 407s as % of GE 407s:** 26.7

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The school is located in a "very rundown area", an impression supported by the poverty index of 100.0%. The principal was characterized as accessible and cooperative. There is no evidence of an attendance plan and the attendance committee was characterized as informal, consisting of the PTA president, the UFT Chair and the Guidance Counselor. However, there is an active pupil personnel committee consisting of the special education guidance counselor, special ed site supervisor, and the UFT Chair who is also a special ed teacher.

A guidance counselor serves as the attendance coordinator, and there is a family assistant located in the school. This F.A. expressed some concern over safety, showing the OREA researcher bullet holes on the wall of her office! She also keeps the consecutive register; however, the register was found not to correspond completely with the 407s or with students who had been long-term absentees in the previous year.

Attendance services in the school include: phone calls, letters home, home visits, parent workshops, parent guidance, rewards and incentives, tutoring, peer counseling, and individual counseling. In general, the

attendance coordinator advocates integrating activities for all students, with some additional attention to special education, LEP, STH, and early childhood students. In the latter group, parents tend not to send them in bad weather. Therefore, the A.C. has focused on obtaining free clothing including winter jackets. Overall, the A.C. notes a large number of problems which indicate neglect or possible abusive behavior. He stated that there were thirty such cases last year.

These cases may not be attendance problems per se. The A.C. also pointed out that "special education can be more vulnerable". For example, one student with Down's syndrome was bussed to school. No one was home after school, so the child had to ride around on the bus. The school instituted abuse proceedings.

The Family Assistant supports the A.C.'s information: "Weather's a big thing ... I tell one family of kids to cry when their mother doesn't get up to take them to school. It works. She'd rather bring them than have them cry. Now they have good attendance."

The F.A.'s routine begins with attempting to determine the reason for the child's absence by phone. She makes fewer home visits than in the past, and sometimes calls the district office for help in making these visits. She also singles out "shelter kids" as the largest group with poor attendance: "the kids move and don't notify us."

The special education site supervisor is full-time for this particular site. In her experience: "Most attendance problems are related to the parent's not getting the child onto the bus or a problem with the bus or bus company". Another problem unique to special education is absence due to the parent contesting the placement.

The site supervisor makes phone calls and sends letters herself when a student is out for more than three days. At first, the supervisor stated that "a 407 is issued only if there is no response to a home visit." Later, she said that a 407 is generated when a student is absent without excuse for five or more days, or when a parent does not cooperate within 10 or more days. The discrepancy can be explained by the situation where the F.A. or supervisor were unable to receive information regarding absence within five days.

According to general education teacher interviews, transferring from one school to another also affects the ability of general education students to attend school consistently. One of the general education teachers makes phone calls herself, while another relies on interaction with the attendance office. A MIS I teacher states that attendance in her class is excellent this year, and she notifies the office after three consecutive absences. Last year she had a student who received a 407 for excessive sporadic absence, but it "really did not have much of an effect."

All three teacher-interviewees mentioned that parents simply keep students at home without indicating illness as the underlying reason for the absence.

Overall, this school appears to have strong special education and attendance personnel. The lack of an attendance plan was disappointing (this was one of the schools with a change of principal in the past year). Parental involvement is emphasized, and practical matters such as obtaining warm clothing and alarm clocks are attended to. A very small sample showed general education and special education teachers to be equally involved in preventing absence, and identifying problems.

APPENDIX H

MIDDLE SCHOOL CASE STUDY

Study school: B-12

Comparison of General Education and Special Education Attendance and 407 Experience

Total #-GE Students	Attendance Rate	Total GE-407s	% 407s
463	89.1	81	17.5
Total #-SE Students	**Attendance Rate**	**Total SE-407s**	**% 407s**
106	76.7	28	26.4
MIS I 55	79.2	13	23.6
MIS III 12	80.8	3	25.0
Other SE 39	71.4	12	30.8

Total Register: 569

Total 407s: 109

SE Students as % of GE Students: 22.9

SE 407s as % of GE 407s: 34.6

Summary of Qualitative Findings

B-12, located in a predominantly Hispanic community (poverty index 84.1%), has a large special education program which includes two bilingual MIS I classes in 1991-92, as well as monolingual MIS I, II, and III classes. The OREA researcher characterized the principal as an approachable, hands-on administrator. The principal himself stated that he considers attendance to be a top priority and points to the greater than 85% attendance rate. However, as the tables above demonstrate, special education attendance rates are 12.4% lower than general education rates.

Attendance-related services at the school include: phone calls, letters home, home visits, parent workshops, rewards and incentives, and individual and peer counseling. In addition, there have been special services targeted to the STH population; i.e., individual parent meetings, and after-school recreational programs.

One disappointment is the lack of a written attendance plan, nor does the school have an attendance committee. Instead, the attendance coordinator says that he meets with the principal on a daily basis. The special education site supervisor also states that she is a part of informal meetings which deal with attendance issues.

The principal created the position of attendance coordinator three years ago. It is now held by a gym teacher who says he knows most of the students "by name". He considers punctuality to be equally important with attendance. One student told our researcher that the A.C. talks to students in such a way that they want to come to school. Although the A.C. states that he treats special and general education students alike, one special education teacher pointed out that some students were becoming agitated while having to wait for a late pass. Therefore, the special education department decided to handle student attendance and lateness through the Crisis Intervention Teacher (C.I.T.).

The attendance improvement program was cut due to increases in attendance in the past year. However, there is one project worker present two days per week. The school also uses the services of a part-time attendance aide to check daily computer printouts, send out postcards, and expedite the 407s. In addition, the District Attendance Teacher comes to the school one day per week.

The special education site supervisor is on-site four days per week. She states that 407s are sent out before the ten-day mandate, but otherwise sees no difference in services or procedures between special education and general education students. This is because "students belong to a school first, then they are special education."

The OREA researcher was able to interview a MIS III intermediate school teacher. The students in this class were 15 to 16 years old. One 407 case involves a student who commutes from another borough. This teacher does not seem to be especially involved in the attendance process. One general education teacher volunteered that he used to be more involved in attendance follow-up before ATS, since the roll book gave him more of a visual sense of attendance patterns. Another general education teacher, whose register includes resource room students, states that he uses homeroom time to do guidance on health and attendance-related issues.

In sum, this is an apparently concerned school which is attempting to find some creative ways of dealing with attendance issues. Philosophically, the leadership seems committed to integration of services for all students, but some willingness to modify this stance when necessary was shown through the use of the C.I.T. for special education attendance problems. This intervention was begun when it was found that special education students were becoming "agitated" by following the procedures begun by the attendance coordinator. It will be interesting to see if any progress has been made in the special education attendance rate in the 1991-92 school year.

APPENDIX I

HIGH SCHOOL CASE STUDY

Study school: VIII

Distribution of Absence by Days[a]

	0-5 days	5-15 days	16+ days
General Ed.	40.8	32.8	26.5
Special Ed.	35.1	30.8	34.2

Comparison of General Education and Special Education Attendance and 407 Experience[b]

	Register w. LTA/w.o. LTA	Attendance Rate w. LTA/w.o. LTA	#-407s	407s as % register
Gen. Ed.	2,700/2,570	83.6/86.5	621[c]	23.0 (w. LTA)
Sp. Ed.	126/ 118	74.7/77.9	36[d]	28.6 (w. LTA)

SE Register as % GE: 4.7 (w. LTA) **SE 407s as % of GE 407s:** 5.8

[a] Source: 1990-91 School Profile. Each column represents the proportion of the total register absent for the specified number of days. This is an average of Fall and Spring statistics. The row does not total 100% due to the effect of rounding.

[b] Source: Monthly Attendance Reports for 1990-1991; year-to-date summary as of July, 1991.

[c] Source: OREA's examination of Form 407s on file for the 1990-91 school year. OREA reviewed every ninth general education 407 (n=69).

[d] Source: OREA's examination of Form 407s on file for the 1990-91 school year. OREA reviewed every third special education 407 (n=12).

Appendix I (Cont'd)

Summary of Qualitative Findings

As the data above demonstrate, H.S. VIII is about average in terms of attendance rates for both special and general education. The school is an educational option high school open to students in the five boroughs. Attendance staff have noticed a correlation between distance from the school and attendance.

Schoolwide personnel involved with attendance include: attendance teacher, three attendance aides, an A.P. for attendance and guidance, and five guidance counselors. In addition, there is an A.P. for special education, an attendance coordinator for special education, and a special education para who makes phone calls daily. Other sources of information concerning student absence includes the NYPD truancy squad which picks up between five and eight students daily. The OREA researcher was impressed by the sensitivity and commitment of the staff.

In addition, to UAPC bubble sheets, the teachers are mandated to keep roll books. Attendance is taken in the fourth period by the subject teacher. As in other schools, home room classes are being fazed out; at H.S. VIII the home room class meets once a week. Generally, home room teachers in either general or special education do not follow up on absentee problems, although some do call home: "It depends on teacher morale". If a teacher does request a 407, the aide can write up a special truant slip. In most cases, 407s are computer generated.

Once the data from the bubble sheet are entered into the UAPC system, the computers are set to generate post cards on the day of absence. In addition, the attendance aides scan the roll books every week and can make phone calls if necessary. The aides ask for a list of students with ten or more absences from UAPC on a monthly basis.

The attendance teacher works closely with guidance. Guidance counsellors often call home and can make referrals for the 407; however, here again much depends on the personality of the guidance counselor. All home contact, as well as any other pertinent information, should be noted on the back of each student's roll card. Thus, the roll card is the key attendance document. Students are generally very lax about bringing in absence notes, and the sentiment is that there is really nothing which the school can do about the problem.

Special education has its own attendance committee, in addition to the school's committee and attendance plan. Procedures for special education students are supplemented on a daily basis by the paraprofessional who receives a list of absentees, and calls the students' homes. Aside from the smaller class size in special education which can allow for closer student-teacher contact; the A.P. for special education has one-eighth the number of students as does the A.P. for attendance and guidance. Family assistants can make home visits, but

this is not their primary function. Due to safety concerns, F.A.s sometimes need to make visits in pairs.

The attendance teacher views the 407 as a time log or monitoring device for the Bureau of Attendance. He believes that its strength lies in the fact that it legalizes the attendance teacher's entry into the home and informs the parent of the student's absence. However, there is a strong likelihood that a home visit will not be made, due to the sheer numbers of cases. As of April, 1992, there were 985 cases for the year, of which 450 were closed. Although, the attendance teacher prefers to make a home visit, he often closes the case solely on the basis of telephone contact with the parent. Also, since this A.T. deals with 407s in chronological order, it is likely that 407s generated towards the end of the year will not receive attention.

The 407 is not an accurate indicator of the amount of time spent on a case. When making a home visit, the A.T. jots down notes in the elevator or in the subway, in order to allay parental suspicions. Furthermore, not everything that transpires is noted because the 407 is accessible to "everybody". Thus, the A.T. keeps his own logs on home visits and transfers key information onto the 407. Despite these caveats, the 407s from H.S. VIII were among the most complete in our sample.

H.S. VIII does not offer as many preventive services as some of the other study schools, but there are work-study, and other occupationally-oriented programs for both special and general education youngsters. The A.P. for special education considers her students to be "different in ability, but not in aspiration. They are here because they want to achieve." Even so, students have a difficult time completing high school. Present school budgets were seen as a primary constraint in providing more services. Secondly, there is a lack of parent involvement, and finally, for serious cases, there is a lack of coordination between the school and the juvenile justice system.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR JOSE P STUDY 1991

Anton, William. 1982. "A Subcommittee Report on Educational Opportunities and Needs for Divergent Youth". LA UFD, CA.

Divided divergent youth into 2 groups: academic failures in school or already out, negative behaving youth including chronic truants. Students w/ behavioral problems require a continuum of in and out of school programs (6); at the same time there are fewer classes for the academically divergent.

As of 1981-82:

1. up to 10% of Jr. and Sr. HS students who transfer don't show up.
2. significant # of 10th graders don't complete.
3. 12th grade enrollment decreases as much as 65% between October and June.

Appendix A: Compares the 2 types of divergent youth.

I. **Failure Syndrome, Non-achievers, dropouts** (8): "youth academically not successful if in school...reflect a substantial attrition rate distict-wide". Characteristics:

- poor readers
-long-term failure pattern in JHS
-"Poor attendance, with large blocks of ansenteeism. Patterns of tardiness, late enrollement, class 'ditching', and school 'hopping' (several schools within a year)".
-"passively conform to parent and school expectations that ehy attend school". Motivated also by opportunities to socialize at school.

II. **Behavioral Problems** (9): looked at 13-18 year olds with varying levels of violence. Grouped according to: current enrollment, not currently enrolled, involved w/juvenile justice system.

California State Dept. of Education. 1988. "The General Education/Special Education Task Force Report".

1/3 of California students drop out before graduation. Does not address isue of attendance per se but calls for a unified system of special education which will lead to a "decrease in grade-level retention and dropout rate".

Cosden, Merith A. 1990. "Expanding the Role of Special Education: Challenges of the Next Decades" in Teaching Eceptional Children. 22(2):4-7.

"As our knowledge about learners who are exceptional has

grown...It has become apparent that complicance with legislative initiatives has not maximized educational opportunities or assured quality education for students with handicaps" (4).

"It makes little sense to deny special services to students at risk of dropping out because they do not fit our traditional concept of special education students or to provide services only to those who fit the special education mold. In the next decade [1990s], special educators are likely to be pressed to address the problems of school ateendance as well as school achievement for all students". ... "Both special and regular education teachers are ill perepared to manage the diversity and complexity of demands place on them".(5)

Increased teacher collaboration will decrease dropping out because decreased isolation of special education will increase "school-wide ownership" of difficult kids (6).

The at-risk for dropping out has difficulties with structure, format and content: "for many students quality instruction needs to be measured in ways more basic than academic achievement, that is, by the power of the schools to hold these students within the education system" (7).

Edwards, Roger H. 1984. "Special Education Report 1983-1984: A Report to the Board of Education" St. Louis Public Schools.

Report on computerized tracking system institued in 81-82.

HS attrition rates--divided 1984 cohort into 2 groups: 45 LD and 59 EMR. Estimated 4 year attrition rate for for LD was 64% w/11% graduation rate and 49% attrition rate for EMR w/14% graduation rate. NOnhandicapped=46% attrition and 25% graduation!!!(41)

Focus on middle school transition for causative factors. Higher attrition rate whn come from self-contained class in mid school and go to RR only in HS (42). Sporadic or nonattendance in RR due to: lack of communication between the sending and receiving school, or the receiving school's RR already at maximum capacity. Significant number of resoruce students have poor school attendance records. some don't go to RR because don't receive credit. "This program makes some feel they are being penalized instead of helped... The 2n class non-credit status of the resource program also makes it difficult to get the cooperation of cousnelors and administrators to help to enforce attendance standards. Attendance in the RR is simply not seen as a high priority (48).

Halpern, Andrew. 1987. "Characteristics of a Quality Program" in Warger

Data from a 1984 study in Oregon focusing on curriculum and instruction led to the development of a set of 55 standards for evaluation of a quality secondary special education. Called fro coordination w/ voc. ed. and reg. ed., and better documentation for planning and on school-leaving. Standards include:

#49 "Demographic information is available for special education students with respect to the manner in which they exit from school"

#50 "Procedures exist for conducting systematic follow-up evaluations on the community adjustment of students with disabilities who leave school either by graduating, by dropping out, or by aging out" (54).

Made no recommendations re attendance.

Illinois State Task Force on Hispanic Student Dropouts. 1985. "A Generation too Precious to Waste". Illinois State General Assembly

Executive Summary

"Students experiencing multi-course failure and chronic truancy are easily identifiable potential dropouts". Push-outs are students below the age of 16 who doent attend school; truant. Such "marginal" students may be "encouraged to officially leave school at 16". 2nd most cited reason for leaving school without a degree.

High correspondence: between non-attendance and juvenile crime, non-attendance and fear of gangs, lack of Hispanic staff, lack of support services.

Specialized Programs and Special Education: Misclassification & Misplacement

Lack of access to special education for Hispanic kids ... "Hispanics, especially those w/LEP are improperly placed in special ed". Have culturally biased evals due to lack of qualified bilingaly special ed. staff.

Janssen, David, Thomas Isles, Stephen O'Keefe & David A. Sabatino. 1988. "The Intent of Secondary Special Education" in Illinois Schools Journal. 67(2):17-25.

Intent of study is to examine the perception of a sample of secondary special ed teachers. "Regular secondary educators tend to develop a prevailing attitude that suggests school attendance instead of a right". Secondary special educators see their primary role as academic support instead of preparation for post-secondary employment or the ability to access community support systems. Handicapped students spend between 25% and 90% of time in reg ed

(Mean=70%).

Method--45 secondary special educators received structured interviews re diagnostic data and the impact on the curriculum. Exam of IEP.

The article focuses on the lack of fit between diagnostic information and curriculum planning. Make a connection between better planning and a decrease in dropout problem (23). Also assert that the "prevailing attitude of most regular educators is that the attention of the secondary schools must be focused on the successful student", therefore the "attitudes of special educators is a sensitive issue" (23).

Karcz, Stanley A. 1985. "The Impact of a Special Education Related Service on Selected Behaviors of Detained Handicapped Youth".

Report on the Youth Advocate Liasison to a school initiated and funded probation service. The data comes from Lake County (?).

R of Lit--"school attendance related studies re dropouts and truants emphasize negative expectations emanating from the school"--teachers low expectations, low grades, lack of involvement by teachers/administratiors in extracurricular activities (13).

Attendance data after detention: reg.ed w/o YAL=.2052 probability of attending school, regular ed. w/YAL=.7677 prob.; RR w/o YAL +.2695 probability; RR w/YAL=.9140 (25). this study does not discuss levl of attendance before detention, only that if had been attending school were more likely to have been suspended than if not attending school at all.

Lichtenstein, Steven and Kathy Zantal-Wiener. 1988. "Special Education Dropouts. **ERIC Digest #451.**

Recommends identification of dropout prone students early in their school careers before high school with more services before high school, at transition and during high school. "Studenrts who are mildly handicapped an mainstreamed are at greatest risk of dropping out". Multiply handicapped in self-contained classes are less likely to drop out. Should reevaluate the IEP process: "The early introduction of goals and objectives that address methods of student retention and transition-related services appears justifiable. Also need to address institutional features.

Sansone, Janet. 1987. "Issues and Trends in Secondary Education for Handicapped Youth" in Cynthia Warger, ed. Secondary Special Education: A Guide to Promising Public School Programs.

"Secondary schools in America are not good places to be...

Many secondary teachrs are leaving the profession even as their sturdentes are dropping out of school" . Sees releationship between secondary school reform movement and high dropout rate with its emphasis on increasing academic achievement (20).

Strum, Irene. 1986. "Determining Program Effectiveness in Special Education" AERA paper

"Attendance is viewed as attidinal information; change in attitude frequently precedes cognitive change. These data are used for accountability in process evaluation.

Semmel, Melvyn I. 1987. "Special Education in the Year 2000 and Beyond: A Proposed Action Agenda for Addressing Selected Ideas".

Study of policy in 24 California districts with a focus on the mildly handicapped. 7 main concerns: over-identification of the mildly handicapped, droputs, LREs, curriculum, teacher training, technology, theory, research and leadership training. Does not address attendance per se, but expresses concern that students are being "pushed out" on the middle and high school level..."by site administrators practicings a policy in response to present and future pressures to conform to academic excellence and educational reform" (309). Need to learn more about the relationship between behavioral norm violations, absenteeism, school failure, droput rates and delinquency. Do schools send a message to difficult-to-teach students that they are unwanted and "should voluntarily leave"?(310). Appalling lack of research data including relationship between race/ethnicity and dropping out (311). Should use models w/ out-of-school settings to reach the difficult to teach.